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The Editors
ABORTION
TEN YEARS LATER

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JANUARY 28, 1983

James Tunstead Burtchaell
WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN
TO PENTECOSTALS . . .

Martin E. Marty
IS OUR GOD AN
IMPERIALIST?

Contemporary theology issue

REDISCOVERING ASCETICISM
Margaret R. Miles

Liberation theology in actual practice
Arthur F. McGovern

Epoch III: the church feminized
John W. Glaser

ALSO: Abigail McCarthy, J. Bryan Hehir, Gerald Weales

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Correspondence

The bear facts

Ithaca, N.Y.

To the Editors: In your Nov. 19 editorial "Why the Voters Were Freezing" you asked "Must our safety be built on the anxiety of the Russians?"

The question, however, is invalid as the Soviets are the ones causing anxiety by their unwarranted military buildup. George F. Kennan notwithstanding, the Russian bear is indeed "hovering hungrily over Western Europe" and other non-Communist nations as well, as indicated in the Soviet press.

Voters who favored a nuclear freeze were not very well informed and allowed their emotions rather than their intellect to rule. John Barron, Senior Editor of the *Reader's Digest,* revealed to some extent the influence the Soviets have in the nuclear freeze movement. The trouble is that liberals do not want to hear such information. They would rather bury their heads in the sand of a nuclear freeze movement that would in fact increase the possibility of nuclear war.

ROBERT BART

From self to others

Wausau, Wis.

To the Editors: In his article, "Religion and Power in America Today," [Dec. 3], Robert N. Bellah argues persuasively "that only the church as a type of Christian social organization can effectively combat the radical individualism and the managerial manipulativeness of modern society." But that the church "must be complemented by a new understanding of citizenship and the common good in political life." And herein lies the problem.

Radical individualism has stripped away much of the self-deception that disguised self-interest and so often made us appear more other-concerned and self-giving than we really are, leaving us naked in our self-interest. As a result, many despair of the future because they have come to believe that all caring is basically self-interested, that we are doomed because we are not capable of anything but self-interest. Too many, especially the young, are cynical about Christianity because they see how often Christians have taken God's name in vain by using their dedication to God to justify acting in narrow interests.

It was necessary to recognize the depth of human self-interest and the extent of our self-deception before change could take place. But, now, somehow the church has to find a way to restore hope that change is possible by restoring faith in humankind's capacity to set aside self-interest honestly, to discern the common good with the compromise and sacrifice of narrow concerns cooperation requires. It is not enough for the "church as the body of Christ to remind us that we will survive only so far as we care for one another."

Paul believed it is possible to put on the "new man." Today we desperately need to understand how this flip-flop in consciousness from self to other happens — what makes it happen — what prevents its happening? What conditions enhance the possibility of such change? Do these conditions perhaps constitute the common good? How can we change our underlying self-oriented grasp of reality to an other-oriented perspective honestly without self-deception, without manipulation of self-interest through fear of punishment or promise of reward, without subservience?

The current spate of sociobiology writings on humankind's selfishness and self-deception notwithstanding, I believe we are approaching the point in our self-understanding where we can begin to answer these questions. Perhaps Christians should start asking them.

MARILYN KRAMER

Divine machismo?

Sacramento, Calif.

To the Editors: The letter of Marjorie Reiley Maguire, [Dec. 17], regarding the power of God somewhat confuses me, also a woman and mother. Why "to save God's goodness and God's existence" do "we have to sacrifice God's power"? In Mark's Gospel at the conclusion of the episode of the rich young man (Mark 10:17-27), how then do we explain the words of Jesus, "With God all things are possible"? Again in John 15:6: "Apart from me you can do nothing."

If we are partners and co-creators with God, that is because God has chosen to operate that way. The divine "forays into history" are not necessarily macho, whatever that is supposed to mean. To whom are the miracles of spiritual and physical healing to be attributed? The escape from slavery which is the foundation of the Judeo-Christian tradition? Any good that we are and good that we do we owe to the activity of God in us, also known as divine grace, or the indwelling of God. Not only did God choose to have people work with the divine activity, but to go even further, people were given power to choose, free will. Throughout history, theologians have struggled to clarify the issue. The final solution still lies ahead.

There is much danger, and nonsense, in becoming too hung up over the male/female issue in connection with the identity of God. As I read Genesis 1:27, male and female, both are equally mankind, man and woman. Both are in the divine image. Both are partners of one another in Genesis 2:18, equality in humanity if not in the mathematical sense of sameness.

It might be more to the point to be awed at the power which God did decide to share with us through Jesus Christ and the love behind the decision.

PATRICIA M. LEIPER

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ABORTION TEN YEARS LATER

IT IS TEN YEARS since the Supreme Court, in *Roe v. Wade*, rendered abortion as American as apple pie and nuclear weapons. That is not a nice way of putting it — as opponents of abortion we are not searching for ways of minimizing the reality of millions of fetal deaths — but then we do not mean that comparison as nothing but harsh rhetoric. There are, in fact, plausible reasons why nuclear weapons exist — they are not simply the product of ill will. And now that they do exist, there are grave difficulties to be faced in the effort to abolish them. Perhaps they can never be abolished; perhaps we can only manage to reduce the harm they can do to a minimum. All this is true of abortion as well.

It would be comforting to have a solution, complete and neatly packaged, to the abortion question. Sorry. For better or worse, this journal has proceeded negatively on this issue over the past decade. *Roe v. Wade*, we have argued, was a legal and moral disaster. So was the widespread resort to abortion that exploded in the wake of its legitimation by the Court. On the other hand, a human life amendment that bans all, or virtually all, abortions is probably unachievable; in any case would be unenforceable; and, if somehow politically engineered in the absence of a massive change in public opinion, would be swiftly reversed after doing fatal damage to the right-to-life cause. We do not mean to throw up our hands in despair or to settle complacently into a wiser-than-thou neutrality. But the effort to define what should be *avoided* in the abortion dispute may be the best way to approach a realistic position.

1. *We should avoid reducing the dispute to slogans.* This is obvious. Unfortunately it has been said so often that it may become a slogan itself. Those who think that the question of the rights of the unborn, or of the motivations of women seeking abortions, or of the philosophical and psychological foundations of pro-choice and pro-life positions, or of the law's role in a pluralist society, is simple — well, they are wrong. But those who think that all this complexity is sufficient jusification for leaving the status quo alone — well, they are wrong, too. That is why avoiding stereotypes and slogans needs to be accompanied by the determination that . . .

2. *We should avoid making our peace with abortion.* Abortion may be the destruction of human life, but it is quiet. It is traumatic for many women and some men, but we have ways of coping with that. Its opponents often think of it as painful for its victims, but in the greater number of cases that may well not be the case. And abortion does "solve" immediate, visible problems. Without it, for example, the number of teenage mothers would certainly be greater, with all that implies about blighted lives. So why not forget it, why not leave well enough alone? Simply because many of us have thought about it, have racked our brains over it, indeed have often wished the whole problem could go away — and in the end we have been unable to reach any other conclusion than that the unborn individual has as much

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right to protection as the born individual, and that it would be as arbitrary and unjust to discriminate on the basis of passage through the birth canal as on the basis of race or sex.

The right-to-life movement has many faults to answer for. But it is to its credit that society has not been able to make a peace with abortion. The right-to-life movement has attracted fanatics; has indulged in accusations, dramatics, emotional excesses. So has the woman's movement. So has the peace movement. So did the abolitionists. So would any broad social movement fired by a sense of grave moral and social injustice. These excesses should not be condoned — certainly, much of the right-to-life leadership does not condone them — but they also should not be an excuse for other abortion critics to maintain a respectable silence.

Keeping America from assimilating abortion as "business as usual" poses difficult choices. The Hyde amendment was a perfect illustration. Refusing federal funds for abortion clearly indicated that abortion was in a different category from other medical procedures, that it remained fiercely controverted on moral grounds, and that, at the least, as the Court said, "Abortion is inherently different . . . because no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life." At the same time, the Hyde amendment struck most directly at those most in need of government help. The same ambiguity marks the various laws now confronting the Court — prescribing waiting periods, detailed procedures for informed consent, etc. — as well as federal regulations on separating abortion and contraceptive services. Many of these measures strike us as legally and logically doubtful; in some cases, they seem petty or downright cruel. Yet they constitute a kind of legal guerrilla warfare against abortion that cannot be dismissed out of hand. Striking a realistic balance is not easy, and the difficulty should remind us that . . .

3. *We should avoid putting all our hopes in the law or our energies into politics*. The idea that morality must never be legally "imposed" is silly; so is the idea that the law can never lead but only follow social mores. Both those arguments should have been laid to rest during the struggle over legal segregation. Nonetheless, there are limits to what the law can do; while politics is notoriously limitless in its capacity to expropriate, coarsen, and misdirect moral concern. Both pro-choice and pro-life causes have met frustration in the political arena. In 1980, pro-choice activists were shocked to discover that the fuss over abortion, which should have settled down years before, was more politically perilous than ever. The pro-life forces imagined that their ship was coming in at last; two years later they are wondering whether it has turned out to be the *Titanic*. Neither group of activists has the support of most of the public, which would get a chance to express its own uneven, inconsistent views only if the Hatch amendment passed, at this moment a highly unlikely development. More and more pro-lifers are recognizing that the president may be perfectly sincere in saying his administration will get around to abortion as soon as economic and national-security issues are dealt with — but that, practically speaking, this could mean never. On the other hand, the Democrats seem locked in as the party of abortion. The political standoff will continue.

All the more reason then to think about winning hearts and minds outside of the political arena. The Catholic church, in particular, could make a contribution here. The bishops' support of the Hatch amendment (as well as their coolness toward the human life statute) made sense to us; unfortunately, it was a non-starter, and the bishops are now being accused of abandoning the anti-abortion cause for the anti-nuclear one. The accusations are meant to embarrass the bishops back into a crusading stance of no-compromise on abortion; and in some cases they are meant to undermine the bishops' credibility on the arms issue. But there is no reason why the bishops should not reply with a ringing affirmation of their pro-life position, this time, however, in a much more non-political direction.

For winning minds: Why shouldn't the church join with others in creating and supporting the kind of first-class research and publication program on abortion-related issues that Planned Parenthood provides for the other side? For winning hearts: Mustn't the church and other pro-life forces mobilize far more resources to prove in deed what they proclaim in principle, namely, that every life is precious? Being on the side of the unborn, like being on the side of the poor, requires acts as well as arguments; and at this point, only acts — adoption, support, caring — on an unprecedented scale will probably prove to Americans that a society without abortion is possible.

4 *We should avoid avoidance*. The avoidance practiced by pro-lifers shows itself in the assumption, surfacing again and again, that abortion always has its roots in selfishness. What these people do not want to face is the fact of real and terrible conflicts. Not that every abortion involves a caring woman or couple trapped amidst multiple obligations; but far too many do for the fact to be brushed aside. It is one thing to believe that abortion cannot be the solution; it is another and self-deceiving thing to believe there really is no problem. In an extraordinary article in the December 11, 1983 *America*, Joyce Evans, an experienced pro-life activist, reflects on the circumstances she has seen pushing some women to abortion. "The pro-life movement often emphasizes alternatives and claims that there is always another solution," she writes. "But occasionally, and sometimes too frequently, I must question these statements." She wonders whether the movement is really prepared to face the consequences — and the responsibilities — of the victory it seeks. She warns of the "win/loss mentality" and the crusading spirit: "The 'others' become the enemy; we cease to listen to and evaluate their opinions. The battle has begun, and victims are trampled. . . . Our hearts are set on defending and protecting our sacred goal of life while other lives all around us beg for mercy."

We know of no similar statement emanating from pro-choice ranks, no self-questioning of that depth, no parallel admission of the limits of one's own position and the humanity of one's adversaries. The avoidance practiced by the pro-choice movement and the liberal community generally is truly massive. Layers of euphemism rival anything produced by nuclear strategists: Abortion itself, having metamorphosed into "termination of a pregnancy," is now submerged in the

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larger swamp of "reproductive rights." But the liberals' central avoidance is that of the reality of the fetus. As we have said, the question of the moral status of the unborn individual is not simple, but ultimately that question must be decided on its own terms and not on the grounds of the burdens that one or another conclusion would have on others. Whether animals or slaves or trees or nations have rights depends, at least first of all, on something to do with *them*, not on whether recognizing such rights would impose a hardship on *us*. Yet the pro-choice movement and the liberal community resolutely avoid this question. They will do almost anything to change the subject.

Can they succeed for another ten years?

Report from Rome

BISHOPS' SUMMIT

WILL THE POPE INTERVENE?

Rome

HOW MUCH will the public learn of the five days of talks (January 17 through January 21) between U.S. and West European bishops on the delicate issues of nuclear armament? Since I am writing before the sessions begin, I cannot tell how much of the substance of these talks will remain confidential, how much will be reported openly, and how much will remain rumor. The American bishops, at the November meeting, admitted that some European hierarchies (it was understood to be the French and West Germans) were, like their governments, concerned about the strictures on deterrence and the recommendation of a no-first-use policy that were part of the Americans' draft pastoral letter. The American bishops announced their willingness to pursue these matters with the West Europeans. The January 17-21 consultation in Rome is the first such meeting ever held; it is said to have been called on the American bishops' initiative; and their apparent readiness to listen to European views and achieve a consensus if possible has been much appreciated in Europe.

The U.S. bishops' delegation is led by Cardinal-elect Joseph Bernardin of Chicago and Archbishop John Roach, president of the American episcopal conference. Participants from England, Scotland, Germany, and France include Cardinal Basil Hume of Westminster, Cardinal Joseph Hoefner of Cologne, Cardinal Gordon Gray of Edinburgh, and Bishop Jean Vilnet of Saint-Bié. Hoefner and Vilnet have already conferred on this as well as other matters at Lyons. The German bishops have had talks in Rome about the nuclear issue under the auspices of the Justice and Peace Commission here, although the substance of those talks is not known.

As usual, the pope's role in these deliberations is a matter of both concern and speculation. General Vernon A. Walters, an emissary of the Reagan administration, visited the pope last October and was reported to have requested that the Holy Father induce the American bishops "to be more reasonable." In the course of a quickly scheduled visit to Europe, Vice President Bush will also be seeing the pope, presumably with a similar message included in his luggage.

John Paul and his advisors have thoroughly analyzed the possible effects of recent Soviet disarmament proposals, and the pope is concerned to see that the bishops on both sides of the Atlantic share a reasonably common position on nuclear problems. Furthermore, since the discussion is one conducted on moral grounds, it is possible that papal authority may be invoked. More speculative is the suggestion that the pope's desire to keep Poland in the limelight — indicated by his hint about canceling his visit there next June — may affect his views on the nuclear debate, at least to the extent of not wanting to see the discussion of an East-West nuclear accord totally block out attention to the fate of his homeland.

Yet it is unlikely that the pope will be personally intervening in the bishops' deliberations. (Cardinal-elect Bernardin is scheduled to report to him at the end of the talks.) Nuclear choices are very sensitive national issues in Europe as well as in the U.S., and it seems imprudent for John Paul to involve himself publicly at this stage in such a major political debate. Obviously this does not preclude his expressing his views to the bishops in private audiences. FIRMIN O'SULLIVAN

(Firmin O'Sullivan is a news correspondent in Rome.)

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

CAN WE RESCUE LANGUAGE?

HOPEFULLY, WE CAN OPTIMIZE THINGS CLARITY-WISE

AMITAI ETZIONI has caused a stir with his book whose thesis is that there is no way out of the world crisis until Americans and the rest of the Western world recover or find the values on which community is based. I would like to propose a sub-thesis. To recover values, and to articulate them, requires that we be able to think clearly and concisely and to communicate with each other in clear, unambiguous terms. But the use of language is deteriorating so rapidly that real communication is becoming impossible.

Foxes are guarding the henhouses — the evil warned against in the old saying. Teachers, writers, preachers should be the guardians of language and those who transmit it, enriched and strengthened, from one generation to another. Today many of them are not prepared or able to do so.

There are glaring and horrible examples. Not long ago a Washington paper published a letter from an irate parent

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whose child had brought home a note from her elementary school principal. It was so full of spelling errors and incomplete sentences that it was incomprehensible. Last September Mike Barnicle, columnist for the *Boston Globe*, printed a letter from a high school English teacher which speaks for itself:

> "I get sick and tires of the vandalisism (sic) and all the drinking, too much of it," she began. "I have been a teacher for eight years and I try and tell the kids. They have been a big increase in public drinking, and much of it is beer and some hard liquor. A lot of it is drunk by teenagers who I teach."

No doubt this teacher's concern for her students is genuine but, in Barnicle's words, she is a functional illiterate. Is it any wonder that high school graduates cannot write resumés or that college freshmen have to be tutored in reading skills?

Even when teachers are literate to the extent that they can spell and use words correctly they seem not to have the foggiest notion of sentence structure. I have on my desk the review copy of a book by a writer who was affiliated with the department of arts and sciences at one of the most prestigious of the Ivy League universities. The book abounds with sentences like the following: "The town was heavily Catholic in numbers but governed and outclassed by a Protestant gentry and the relatively new Yankee industrialists." Was the town outclassed? And "They always managed to make just enough more money than was essential, to indulge their personal interests." Why the comma? And do you indulge interests? The author tells us that the waterworks were *aside* the reservoir when she means, I think, *beside*, and tells us that the Irish businessmen of whom she is writing "were known, *not unexpectedly*, to sell a little 'strong medicine' in the backroom of their drugstore" when she means "not surprisingly."

I can hear the exasperated "Oh, you know what she means!" from some readers. And they are right. I do. I do know but I had to puzzle it out. I know, too, that such inexact writing would never have escaped the sharp eye of the copy editor in a good publishing house as short a time as fifteen years ago.Copy editors seem to be a disappearing breed and publishers with an eye to the bottom line do not worry about exactness or precision in language.

The academic writer to whom I refer above does seem to be free of two other evils which mark faculty writing in colleges these days — the over-inflation of language and pedantic jargon. For example, I also have on my desk a letter from a college graduate who works in the public relations department of a large corporation. It informs me "A coincidence of circumstances is bringing me to Washington. While there I will be residing at the Washington Hilton." That is the unnecessary inflation of language. Why not simply "I am coming to Washington on business and will be staying at the Washington Hilton"? Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style* puts it well, "A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short, or that he or she avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell."

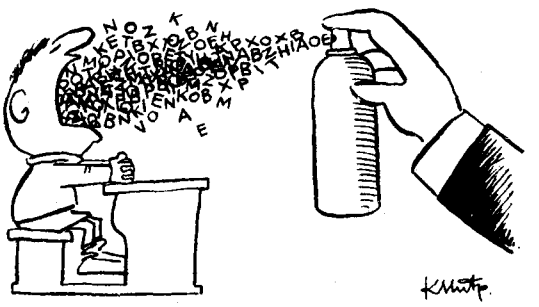
But how can we expect any kind of writing style from liberal arts graduates whose professors are afflicted with the disease we used to call "educationese" — because it was confined to the new departments of education — but is now more readily recognized as "bureaucratese"? College teachers and administrators alike use non-words like "prioritize" and "finalize." They "utilize" rather than "use." They cheerfully confuse "datum" with "data," "criteria" with "criterion." They "optimize" and "maximize." They talk of "in put" and "output." They pronounce things "viable," see them as "interfacing." And have the illusion that they are speaking the English of educated persons! To borrow from another jargon — that of computers — is it any wonder that "garbage in" means "garbage out?" If the teachers lead, can the students be far behind?

Occasionally a champion of plain English makes an appearance in an unexpected place — like the Reagan cabinet. Secretary Malcolm Baldridge was so put off by the letters which came to his desk for signature that he issued a guide for writers in the Department of Commerce. He asked not only that they avoid the expressions I have listed, but also they they avoid meaningless phrases like "at the present time," "mutually beneficial," "contingent upon," and "management regime." He pointed out that "hopefully" should be "I hope" and that "more importantly" should be "more important." (That these last two errors have been defended as made legitimate by use is only further evidence of the decline in the sense of language by the arbiters themselves — more foxes in yet another coop.)

The secretary did not ask but ordered his writers to avoid redundancies — among others "serious crisis," "new initiatives," "final outcome," "future plans," "end result," "untimely death" and inquired, one imagines with desperation, "Has there ever been a timely death?"

Sadly enough, one has the feeling that the Secretary is waging a losing battle. A people who do not and cannot read, whose ear is attuned to the lumpish oral shorthand of television news, and whose vocabulary grows smaller even as technical vocabularies increase is a people losing touch with meaning.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY



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Church/world watch

Kennan & the U.S.-Soviet debate

J. Bryan Hehir

THE LAST two years manifest a striking shift in public attitudes and policy debate concerning U.S. defense policy. President Reagan, elected in 1980 on a platform espousing a revitalized American defense program, had little if any opposition in 1981 as he placed arms control on the back burner and successfully sought from Congress a substantial long-term increase in defense spending. Significant signs of change appeared in the last year. A constituency for arms control and disarmament re-emerged. Budget deficits began to force reevaluation of the administration's policy of protecting defense spending from cuts. And one of the key elements in the president's program — the MX — was dealt a severe setback in the waning days of the lame-duck Congress. While not retreating at all from his determination to increase military spending in spite of deficits and a depression-prone economy, the president did move in 1982 to pursue arms control in the START and INF negotiations at Geneva.

If one asks how 1983 will compare with 1982, my guess is that we will see the nuclear debate put in its political context, i.e., the shape of U.S.-Soviet relations. Both the administration and its arms control critics must face the question but from different perspectives. The Reagan administration's position vis-à-vis the Soviets is sufficiently well known but it is not clear that the "early Reagan" position of unrelenting attack on the Soviets will be adequate to create the atmosphere needed to obtain cooperation on the arms control proposals the president has put on the table in Geneva. For the administration, therefore, the question is not paying attention to U.S.-Soviet relations but doing it with a different style and substance.

From those who have forced a change in the administration's priorities on arms control by making the nuclear question a central political issue in the United States, the agenda is different. Critics of the arms control constituency often make the case that the latter are fascinated by weaponry and strategic doctrine but not sufficiently attuned to the political context within which the arms race exists. The argument is not a decisive case against the nuclear critics, but it does require their attention. They too must correlate their proposals for reversing the nuclear arms race with a coherent account of U.S.-Soviet relations.

The relationship of the political context of the nuclear arms race and its strategic context takes on new significance with the change of leadership in the Soviet Union. The transition from Mr. Brezhnev to Mr. Andropov has generated a series of essays in the press about the present state of U.S.-Soviet relations and future possibilities for change. Writing in *The New Republic* in successive weeks, Zbigniew Brzezinski argued that an open moment exists for the U.S. to strike a deal with the Soviets on a series of issues, while Adam Ulam contended that the possibilities for movement were severely limited by the nature of the Soviet system.

The contending prescriptions could be catalogued at length, but I use them only as a background to highlight the appearance at this critical moment of George Kennan's new book, *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age* (Pantheon, $13.95, 207 pp.). This collection of Kennan's essays over the past decade, along with a new essay in the 125th anniversary issue of *The Atlantic* (November 1982), provides a standard of excellence against which both the administration and its critics can be tested on their views of U.S.-Soviet relations. Kennan says in the introduction to his book that he hopes it will mark the end of an epoch in his life, spanning thirty-five years of writing on American policy toward the Soviet Union. Given the crucial choices before us in superpower relations, others will hope that the richness of Kennan's recent contributions will only intensify his involvement in our foreign policy debate. My purpose here is not to provide a review of the book but to highlight two chapters, along with the *Atlantic* article, as indications of the quality and precision needed by all sides in the nuclear debate.

The chapter entitled, "The American-Soviet Relationship: A Retrospective View," has been described by Professor Stanley Hoffman in the following way: "I know of no better recapitulation of the Soviet-American relationship from the Russian Revolution to the present. . . ." The reasons for this glowing endorsement from a demanding critic are not hard to identify. In this chapter and in the *Atlantic* article Kennan performs a dual service. He provides from his extensive historical, personal, and linguistic knowledge of the Soviet Union an account of the driving forces of Soviet conduct since 1917 and at the same time he sympathetically but incisively accounts for American reaction and, at times, overreaction to Soviet moves. The value of this dual interpretation is not simply the light it throws on the past. Ever since the presumed "failure of détente," U.S. policy has again been shaped by an interpretation of Soviet moves that lacks the nuance and perspective found in both of Kennan's historical essays. It is perhaps too much to ask diplomats subject to daily pressures to think and act with the cool clarity of a Kennan essay, but it is not too much to hope that the American public can be influenced by this lucid interpretation of why the Soviets act as they do and how we can

(Continued on page 62)

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The recovery of asceticism

MARGARET R. MILES

JONATHAN SCHELL'S *The Fate of the Earth* is only one of the recent works that ponder the gap between the unprecedented possibility of nuclear annihilation and our apparent inability to respond to this danger in any but the most conventional ways. One thinks of the civil-defense ditties featured in the film *The Atomic Cafe*, or the deluded complacencies of the government officials interviewed by Robert Scheer in *With Enough Shovels*, or the dottie stiff-upper-lip of the British couple who would go genteelly into that dark nuclear night in Raymond Briggs's satiric *When the Wind Blows* Repeatedly, for example, Mr. Schell puzzles over the attitude of an overwhelming majority of the American population over this "fact of life" with which we have lived for the last thirty-six years. He characterizes this attitude as "deadness," "failure of response," and "dullness and coldness." He traces the symptoms of this torpor as they affect every aspect of our lives — sex, personal relationships, social and political attitudes. "Both self-interest and fellow feeling seem to have died," he writes. "If we do end the world, the sequence is likely to be not a burst of strong-willed activity leading to a final explosion, but enervation, dulled senses, enfeebled will, stupor and paralysis. Then death."

Why don't Christian theologians talk more about this enfeeblement of sense and will — and its effects on our social and political life? Have theologians been talking about souls for so long that we no longer know how to think about bodies — human bodies and the body of our earth?

Attention to historical Christian attitudes to the human body can address both the global situation in which we stand and the contemporary failure of Christian theology to take the body as seriously as God did in taking a human body. Christian tradition shows two very different — even contradictory — attitudes toward the meaning and value of the human body, one which may be leading us to extinction and one which offers concrete suggestions for arresting the hypnotized shuffle toward the cliff.

Let us look first at Scripture: In the Old Testament, ascetic practices were the means, the method, of *political* sensitivity. Again and again in national crises the prophets preached a program of altering habitual behavior, fasting — acting differently — in order to wake people up to a threatening situation. Private and public ascetic practices always accompanied the prophets' calls to repentance and awareness. They saw that as long as people continued to be cushioned by their habitual daily living, they would not recognize the peril in which they stood. Asceticism was a political and social act; the most personal actions were understood to be the most public and political.

The New Testament, on the other hand, is full of injunctions to asceticism that are directly related to an expected imminent end of the world. Asceticisms of fasting, watchfulness, and celibacy are urged in the gospels and in Paul as a method of overcoming the sluggishness that dulls perceptions and promotes inertia in the face of the urgency of what the New Testament authors and Jesus himself took to be a rapidly approaching apocalypse. Here again, in the face of societal inertia, ascetic practices are urged for the purpose of overcoming communally reinforced blindness, the blindness of trying not to see what lies before and all around the community.

It is a striking but largely ignored aspect of scriptural injunctions to asceticism that these practices are always urged in the context of the need to become aware of pressing threat and that they are for *communal* awareness, not for purposes of solitary "enlightenment" or escape. Ascetic practices which make people alert and passionate are assumed to be the most directly efficacious activity that the community and individuals within the community can undertake. The deadness of ordinary life was seen as leading inevitably to the drugged acceptance of physical death.

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WHEN WE LOOK at texts of the first three centuries of the common era, we find a different situation but a similar identification of deadness as the enemy of human life. Authors of the nascent Christian church unanimously insisted that Christian faith was not only the acceptance of new ideas, but that it consisted of new perspectives, new feelings, and new ways of responding to their situation that they called simply "new life." The earliest descriptions of Christian experience say repeatedly that ideas, doctrines, liturgies, iconography, and literature are all ways of trying to formulate and express what had already happened, what Christians experienced simply as "life." Before Christianity was knowledge, before it was rectified moral commitment, even before it was community, Christian faith was explicitly an orientation to the source of life, a "conversion" to full vitality from the deadness of secular culture.

To these early Christians this sense of being "truly alive" seemed to be the opposite not of physical death, but of deadness. There is even a certain "denial of death" in their insistence that *biological* life and the life they were experiencing were not synonymous. Even martyrdom they saw not as terminating life but as opening to richer, permanent life.

The expectation of martyrdom was a daily feature of the life of early Christians. It permeated their consciousness, set the standards for membership in the Christian community, and consolidated the solidarity of the community in the face of the threatening personal apocalypse of its members, and especially its leaders. Certainly there were no "laid back" or "mellow" Christians in the times of persecution of the first three centuries.

Two aspects of this martyrdom situation were particularly emphasized by the contemporary authors of the *Actae* of martyrs, the accounts of their trials, sufferings, and deaths. First, the ecstatic condition in which martyrs met their deaths, an ecstasy in which, according to the eyewitness accounts, they felt no pain, but actively met their deaths preaching to the crowd in the arena, praying, and singing hymns. This experience of ecstatic martyrdom became the conscious or unconscious paradigm of the Christian life, the potential test of every Christian. The second aspect of the persecution that is remarked throughout the *Actae* is the extraordinary capacity for awareness, understanding, and insight of those who were condemned and awaiting martyrdom, the "confessors." These proto-martyrs saw their society and social arrangements with preternatural clarity. They saw visions; dreamed visions; they experienced a "wonderfully concentrated mind" and powerful insight; they had a strengthened and clarified consciousness that permitted them to interpret, predict, and warn.

AS THE MARTYRDOM situation became less frequent, these two features began to be incorporated into the very diverse phenomena of asceticism, the "daily martyrdom" that became a strong part of fourth-century Christianity. The ascetics undertook to become "martyrs in will, that they might not miss the glory of them who were made perfect by blood" (*Barlaam and Joasaph*). Preternatural insight and ecstatic transcendence of pain were still highly valued; but as the stimulus of martyrdom disappeared these two values began to diverge and to lead ascetics to different methods and different goals, depending on which was valued more highly.

The ecstasy model led to harsh ascetic practices that damaged the body, snatching its energy and vitality for the reconstruction — now self-imposed — of the martyr's ecstatic transcendence of suffering. In the fourth century, frequent admonitions of the desert fathers against abuse of the body testify indirectly that a great deal of exceedingly harsh asceticism was going on.

But there was also the awareness that ascetic practices which do not damage the body — indeed are beneficial to the body — can work to remove the deadening habit and addictions of ordinary life.This deadening habit, identified as the crucial obstacle to that vigilance and energy required for effective relationships and lively prayer, was known as the demon of *acedia*. *Acedia* is variously described as lethargy, torpor, inertia, restlessness, and boredom. It is resisted by ascetic practices, but practices that are individually designed to address the personal patterns of thought and activity that cause this deadening. Although *acedia* is, in the words of Evagrius of Ponticus, "the most fierce demon of all," it is always to be addressed with gentle practices that do not damage the body:

> Our holy and most ascetic master stated that the monk should always live as if he were to die on the morrow, but at the same time he should treat his body as if he were to live on with it for many years to come. For, he said, by the first attitude he will be able to cut off every thought that comes from *acedia* and thus become more fervent in his monastic practices, by the second devise he will preserve his body in good health (*Praktikos* 29).

But the purpose is more than good health. The practice is designed to awaken the soul from its inertia, to break destructive emotional and physical habits, and to renew energy and insight. The aim is dehabituation.

BOTH THE ECSTASY MODEL and the dehabituation model represent translations of the values of the early Christian martyrdom situation — and a development of these values in the more tranquil Constantinian epoch that followed. They remain as values, as methods, and as goals throughout Christian history; indeed, they are still with us in a secularized

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version of traditional asceticism that has forgotten its original context. Let us examine two historical representatives of these different ways of conceiving the content of "life," and then consider how pervasively and powerfully operative are these two ideas in our own culture.

The first historical example is that of St. Francis of Assisi. Francis lived what one of his contemporaries called a "life of continuous ecstasy." We will neglect Francis's intimate empathy with the natural world in order to focus on one feature of his life that has not received as much attention. Francis is the first saint reported as receiving the stigmata. After a vision on Mount Alvernia, Francis, his biographer wrote, "retained a most intense ardor and flame of love in his heart . . . and a marvelous imprint and image of the passion of Christ in his flesh." These wounds, it is recorded, gave Francis "very great joy to his heart, and unbearable pain to his flesh and physical senses." This literal physical participation in the suffering of Christ was the direct accompaniment of the "habitual ecstasy" in which Francis lived.

After Francis's time, the interest of western Christians in the stigmata continued. But even some of Francis's immediate and most devoted followers rejected the harshness of the continual ascetic practices which Francis imposed on himself as his method of achieving ecstasy. He fasted to the point of starvation, keeping his body at the point of death for several years at a time; he denied himself sleep, shelter, and food to such extremes that those of his followers with less robust physiques could not imitate him. Medieval people like Francis were fascinated with the way in which physical pain *can* produce ecstatic states. This method of achieving ecstasy is that of seizing the energy and vitality of the body for purposes of the soul.

Another interpretation of the content and goal of Christian life reached full articulation in Francis's contemporary, St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas described the content of Christian life not as ecstasy but as integrated lifefulness. Thomas's description of human happiness is of an integrated pleasure that includes every aspect of human being. Happiness, as Thomas describes it, occupies a range of human experience between what he calls "delight" and "the ease of the lover with the beloved." Predictably, Thomas's method of achieving happiness is very different from Francis's method of working the body. "Integral happiness," Thomas wrote, "requires a perfect health of body." His description echoes those of many historic western Christians who have been aware of the usefulness of bodily disciplines but have thought that there was nothing intrinsically Christian in the severe ascetic practices that get one "high" but damage the body. Ascetic practices along this model are designed to address and correct the habituations and addictions that deaden, the self-indulgences that are — in reality — extremely hard on the body.

Here we have a different attitude toward, and treatment of, the body than that dictated by a longing for ecstasy. It is in the participation of the whole human being, body and soul, in the unique activity of God that happiness can be achieved, and this activity is love: "God *is* love," Augustine keeps repeating, "no one has *seen* God at any time; if we love one another, God lives in us and God's love is perfected in us." The happiness of human beings is that of experiencing God in the activity of living lovingly, not only, Thomas would later say, by "delight of the mind," but also in the "quickening and perfecting of the bodily senses." The capacity to love, it seems, is the opposite of "deadness, failure of response, dullness, and coldness." Any asceticism in this model — the lifefulness model — is and must be for the benefit of body and soul alike.

WHAT HAS ALL THIS to do with us? First, I think we share with these historic people the longing to be alive, awake, and sensitive to our personal and public situation. The necessity of being "alert and passionate" has never been as important in the public sphere as it is now — when a few human beings have in their control the life and death, not only of individuals nor even of nations, but of the human race and the planet that is our home. We cannot afford the habits and addictions that sustain and cushion, that mask and protect, settled perspectives, conditioned life styles, and conventional patterns of relationship which keep us from effective protest against a suicidal course.

Are not the two definitions of what constitutes the experience of lifefulness still with us — the ecstasy model, that uses, works, and damages the body in order to "get high," and the less frequently encountered lifefulness model, that recognizes care for the body as an important aspect of integrated happiness? And the methods by which each of these goals were realized in historic Christianity, the ascetic practices that either (in the ecstasy model) damaged the body, or (in the integrated lifefulness model) were used to locate and address the habits and addictions which dulled the senses, the sensibility, and the intellect — these methods are still with us also. American culture contains a caricature of ecstasy-oriented asceticism. *We* are as much ascetics as the medievals were. We know intimately and all too well about the use and abuse of the body for purposes of feelings of intoxication.

The methods of the ecstasy model are easily identified: alcoholism, drug dependence of all kinds, overeating, promiscuity, overwork, a killing life-pace, and a polluted environment. These masochisms of modern life rival, in deadliness, the cavalier abuse of the body of the harshest medieval ascetic. These addictions deaden our senses and our awareness. They support the massive inertia in the face of nuclear threat, environmental pollution, and a host of other social problems. The ecstasy model is always a death orientation. Addiction requires the continual upping of the dose in order to experience the same high and thus inevitably comes to threaten physical existence. As Carlos Castaneda said in one of the Don Juan novels, the progressive deadening of the body through increasing doses leads insensibly to death, "the biggest high of all."

If we are worried — as we should be — about the failure of response, the sluggishness, dullness, and coldness of many Americans to nuclear war, the persistence of poverty and world hunger, and so on, we must find ways to identify and confront the sources of this deadness, not only in the more

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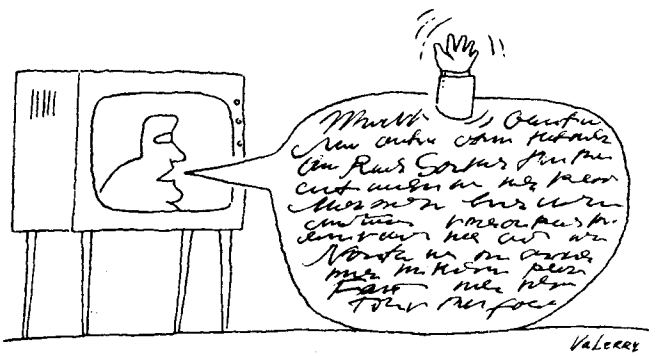
dramatic and obvious addictions of drug abuse, alcoholism, etc., but in the many minor but muffling addictions of contemporary life.

Traditional Christian asceticism of the gentler sort we saw illustrated by Evagrius Ponticus and Aquinas offers us another way to go — one not afflicted with the death orientation of the ecstatic model. We have need of its recovery. Of course, to take on the sensitizing process of mild ascetic practices requires us to trust that change in the individual is a significant first step toward significant social and political change. It is a humble first step, not as dramatic and perhaps not as immediately persuasive as an enormous rally or sit-in. Asceticism is not *the* answer to nuclear threat or any other social or political problem. Whatever the answer or response is, it must be worked out on many fronts — political, ideological, and personal. But asceticism is *relevant* to the capacity to respond, to remove the cushioned incomprehension and the deadened sensibilities that muffle our voice as individuals and as a culture. Whatever else ascetic disciplines do, they are a way of taking responsibility for one's own life, for taking, in the best sense, one's life in one's own hands and thereby confronting the nearly overwhelming seductions of a culture equipped with unparalleled techniques to make us "sit back" to be a voyeur instead of a participant, a spectator instead of an actor. Passivity deadens, and as settled disposition it deadens absolutely.

HISTORICALLY, ascetic practices themselves became addicting. A powerful tool always carries a danger of becoming an end in itself, an escape from the problems and the responsibilities of the communal world. This must be recognized; yet we are not so much in danger of too-harsh ascetic practices as we are of forgetting the usefulness of any asceticism. If the "sharp quick sense of life" is our goal, the "alert and passionate" energy for effective protest and correction of our situation, the dehabituation of our daily lives must be placed high on our agenda. Short fasts, of benefit both to body and soul, for example, can demonstrate to most of us the degree to which we have become addicted, not only to food for nourishment and enjoyment, but to *mealtimes* as a structure for organizing our days. Another kind of fasting whose usefulness is fully demonstrated only by doing it, is fasting from the media. The disorientation and discomfort that result from stopping the constant barrage of newspapers, magazines, television, and radio show us to what a large extent our consciousness is controlled and ordered by the media.



Various disciplines of meditation, — as in some historic Christian communities — involving breathing exercises and bodily postures can be useful for gathering and concentrating attention and energy. Physical exercise, periods of solitude, of silence, or of celibacy: any of these ascetic practices might at some time be highly effective and valuable for locating and treating the habit and addictions that result in deadness. No one of these practices is predictably good for *everybody* at *any* time. They require that individuals become aware of their own particular areas of compulsiveness and address a particular area with a practice designed for it. Nor do these ascetic practices that are good for body and soul imply the disparagement of food, drink, friends,or sex, the good gifts of God for the good of body and soul alike. Gentle ascetic practices are simply a method of clarifying and energizing body and soul together.

I trust this method — the body as method — to achieve the "alert and passionate" consciousness necessary for changing our situation more than I trust the "consciousness-raising" methods employed by many people alarmed about the nuclear threat. The stories of the atrocities of Hiroshima, descriptions of kill and overkill, facts and figures that boggle the mind — all these, unless our minds and bodies are already clarified, tend only to terrify briefly and then to deaden us even further in the face of such overwhelming data. Just as we Americans are habituated to the violence that we read in newspapers and observe on television, the facts and figures about nuclear devastation may, by themselves, deaden us to a possible future so "unthinkable."

Oddly enough, the continuing human taste for ecstasy at any cost and willingness to destroy the body has often been the result of the "consciousness-raising" approach to awareness, for instance, of the nuclear threat. People, not expecting to live a whole life of rounded years, have sometimes chosen the short-term kick, the addictive high, the ecstatic o.d.

If Christian faith and the western Christian tradition has anything to say to us in our present situation it is to help us to question whether the ecstasy model is really consonant with Christian faith, a faith whose doctrinal statements insist on the permanent integrity of the human body as given in creation, modeled in the Incarnation of Christ, and consummated in the resurrection. And Christian faith also presents us with an alternative to the ecstasy model — the model of integrated lifefulness. In describing the simple and humble practices that helped historic people to overcome habituation, addiction, and deadness, the texts of historic Christianity describe a way different from the ultimately numbing "consciousness-raising" method. These historic people discovered that what they *did* was as important as what they *thought*, that insight is quite as likely to follow change — in behavior, in habits of daily life — as change is to follow insight. They understood the body as method and were grateful. As one desert ascetic said: "Those who . . . in some measure have applied themselves to the contemplation of created things know the grace of the Creator in giving them a body." (*Praktikos* 53).

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VARIATION ON A THEME BY KARL RAHNER

Epoch III: the church feminized

JOHN W. GLASER

THE CHURCH STANDS at the beginning of a continental shift, a slow but colossal movement, the likes of which occurred only once before since the beginning of Christianity: the church has inexorably begun its self-realization as World Church. Such is the thesis of Karl Rahner. In the tangled skein of two millennia of Christian history, he discerns a pattern of divine guidance that generates hope, offers direction, and leads to imperatives for our time.

To elaborate his thesis of World Church's beginning, Rahner offers a revolutionary division of church history. He suggests three unequal temporal epochs. Epoch I: Jewish Christianity which lasted less than half a century. This was the period of history in which Christianity was proclaimed to Israel and in Israel. Epoch II is virtually all of Christian history, and it began when Paul planted Christianity in the soil of paganism. The two millennia that we usually divide into the various epochs of Christian history are, in Rahner's fresh scheme, one theological quantum: its essence is the slow, bountiful development of a European/Western Christianity. Rahner's emphasis leads us to note that through the centuries of maturing, the church sang, disciplined, danced, dogmatized, governed, moralized, celebrated, painted, prayed, and pardoned — as European. Paul ventured out to begin a European Christianity.

To be sure, European Christianity was already "world Christianity" in that its thrust was to all corners of the world. European Christianity, indeed, taught all nations. But such world presence was only a precursor to the World Church as Rahner describes it. Rahner remarks about the world presence of European Christianity: "Despite the implied contradiction to its essence, the actual concrete activity of the church in its relation to the world outside of Europe was, in fact, (if you will pardon the expression), the activity of an export firm which exported European religion as a commodity it did not really want to change but sent throughout the world together with the rest of the culture and civilization it considered superior."

Rahner's thesis asserts this epoch is at an end. Vatican II was the first official appearance of the Becoming World Church of Epoch III. In this World-Church epoch, we can expect a further evolution of Christianity no less rich (though longer or shorter, who knows? God knows.) than the nineteen centuries of European actualization and elaboration. The vital forces of world cultures will nurture growth in the Christian community in root, trunk, branch, bloom; in proclamation, doctrine, morality; in its self-realization as community, as law, as sacrament. Nothing will be spared the creative touch of God's hand, mediated through these world cultures.

Primarily the Spirit authors such history, but who will be the inner-worldly agent of this evolution? The World Church itself. Jewish Christianity of Epoch I did not plan and author European Christianity; nor will European Christianity plan and author World Christianity.

Rahner makes it clear that such a beginning of World Church is stuttering, fumbling, and searching for its own self-definition. He notices many forces that hinder and suppress this very development and direction. But he asserts without reservation and repeatedly that we are at the beginning of such a monumental leap into a new epoch of Christian history.

Such is my version of Rahner's thesis (I feel I have just played Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on a harmonica. I commend the concert hall to you: *Theological Studies*, December, 1979). Now for a feminist expansion of this thesis.

THE FEMINIST EXPANSION I'm suggesting is already implicit in Rahner's thesis; I am only making the silent assumption speak. It is necessarily included because Epoch II Christianity is not only European, it is male. To become World Church, it must become the church of both sexes, female as well as male. It cannot become World Church without expanding beyond two boundaries: horizontally beyond the boundary of European culture; vertically beyond the boundary of male culture. While this feminist expansion is merely the explication of a necessary moment of Rahner's major thesis, our present situation demands that it be spoken clearly and not merely be assumed silently.

Even a running glance at Epoch II Church reveals its dominant hormones. God is He with a capital H. His divine community, His angelic and human hierarchies, His authors (from the Old Testament to the latest edition of Denzinger), the doctors and fathers of His Church and His Councils; His

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popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests; those who design His liturgies, build His cathedrals, define His doctrine; those who develop, teach, and preach the theology of God, church, penance, war, and marriage; those who shape community, exercise sanctions, formulate law; those who ordain, anoint, shrive, consecrate, transubstantiate — all are men. Not only are they men, they are men who — with an intense theological grounding and passionate defense — are better able to witness to God's Being and foster life in the church by abstaining from committed intimacy with women.

Clearly Epoch II Church includes women. But they are present much as India, Africa, and the Orient are present in Epoch II: as recipients of exported goods from the superior culture; as colonies of the superpower. Even in those centers of female community and creativity — orders of religious women — we notice they consistently imported their liturgists, spiritual directors, confessors, retreat masters, the rule they obeyed and the Office they prayed, from the male church. How masculinized must consciousness be which can accept without amusement or indignation the ironic construct "Mother General"!

EPOCH III will move us beyond the narrowing assumptions and structures of our ecclesiological male culture, to Woman/Man Church. World Church will happen as the common work, the full community of men and women. As Epoch III Church will become de-Europeanized, so will it become de-masculinized. This does not mean the replacement of male dominance by female dominance; that would only give us the same genus: half World Church, in a new species: women export firm. World Church means no colonialism, no dominance by any culture, geographical or sexual.

But not all phases of this development will have the same characteristics. Right now we need an intense period of ecclesiastical affirmative action. We need to promote Epoch III; we must dedicate energy and imagination to mechanisms of communication with and inclusion of women. We need to do this on two counts: the *injustices* are grave; the *wisdom and humanity lost* to our community are colossal. All current centers of power and influence in the church have a role to play in this effort of feminist structural analysis, critique, and creativity. There are various roles and tools. The bishop's role differs from that of the pastor or the Catholic Theological Society of America, but all of us can help to right wrongs and re-appropriate wasted wisdom. Sometines the scalpel will work, sometimes only the bulldozer will do.

How will this female/male church look? The genius of Paul could not possibly have anticipated the enormous subtlety and richness of the European church whose development he helped author. The same is true of the Church of Epoch III. But I cannot resist a few modest remarks of a most formal and general kind. I assume women will bring to the emergence of Epoch III Church an experience significantly different from men, at least in areas such as: community, ambiguity, body, power, symbol, violence, time, nurturance, sex, space, law, impotence, service. Even if that's all they bring (and it certainly will not be), such influence will create the church anew. This means more than new answers to old questions; the very questions, and beyond that, the community of inquiry will be metamorphosed in fiber, weave, in texture and pattern.

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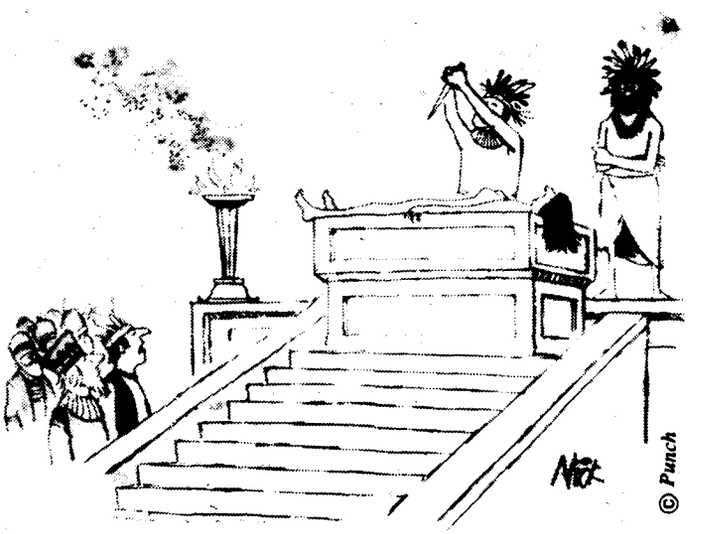
Somewhere down this Epoch III road we will look back on the question of women's ordination much as we look back on the once burning question of Epoch I Church: Gentile circumcision. We will wonder that it could blast the forge to such intensity; but we will also recognize that women's ordination, like the question of Gentile circumcision was indeed a seminal question containing in micro much of the essence of the Epoch to come.

I will conclude with a citation from Rahner's article and a statement of hope. The reader can supply the feminist expansion of these words by Rahner where appropriate. "This, then, is the issue: either the church sees and recognizes these essential differences of other cultures for which she should become a World Church, and with Pauline boldness, draws the necessary consequences from this recognition, or she remains a Western church and so, in the final analysis, betrays the meaning of Vatican II."

The word of hope is simply this: that even the possible "betrayal of the meaning of Vatican II" cannot ultimately succeed in holding off World Church/Church of Women and Men any more than the mentality and opposition of the "circumcisers" was able to hold off the emergence of Epoch II. For indeed, God is with us even to the end of Epoch II, III, and IV, to the pregnant, African pope — and far, far beyond.



"Serves her right. She was always whining about women not being allowed to participate in the services."

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Liberation theology in actual practice

ARTHUR F. McGOVERN

LIBERATION THEOLOGY in Latin America has been the source of great controversy in the church for more than a decade. In the United States it has roused both enthusiastic supporters and ardent critics. The Maryknoll missionaries, in particular, have been praised by many for their commitment to the poor, but excoriated as irresponsible purveyors of Marxism by Andrew Greeley, William F. Buckley, Jr., Michael Novak and others. Pope John Paul II's visits to Mexico and Brazil did not resolve the controversy, for he warned against church involvement in politics but at the same time he championed work for social justice and called for an "integral" liberation theology.

From the writings of liberation theologians I had gained a theoretical understanding of its method. It stresses the need for a faith that expresses itself in commitment to the poor. This faith commitment leads to greater awareness and analysis of socio-economic structures which perpetuate poverty, to active involvement in changing these structures, and to a new understanding of the faith in the light of this involvement. But I had no lived experience of situations in Latin America nor of the work of the church in responding to these situations. So the summer before last I joined a group of Roman Catholic religious (eleven of us) for a seven-week trip through Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Peru. Seven weeks gives only a limited perspective, but it provided me with a much better understanding of conditions in Latin America and of liberation theology as it is actually practiced.

Ojo de Agua is a rural Mexican village typical of much of Latin America. The parish census counts 271 families. All but six families earn less than $150 a month. The largest group (91 families) average between $20 and $40 a month, or less than $500 a year in family income. The median family income for the parish is $80 a month. None of the homes has running water; the nearest clean drinking water is two miles away. None of the homes has electricity. Most families subsist on a diet of beans and tortillas, with some soup, rice, and fruit at the main meal. Maria Concepcion, a sixteen-year-old catechist, comes from one of the "better off" families. They own their own small plot of land and have some few livestock. But even their small hut has only two beds (one of them in a grain-storing bin) for a family of eight. Maria Concepcion, despite her obvious intelligence and vivacity, has little hope of ever going beyond her sixth-grade education.

The pastor of Ojo de Agua, like the pastor of nearby Gamboa de Santa Cruz, follows the "liberation line" of pastoral ministry in his care of several villages. Parish members form Christian base communities. In groups of eight to twelve they reflect on their life situation in the light of the Gospel. Their reflections include a growing awareness of broader social problems that affect them (e.g., land-ownership). But their efforts at action are quite immediate and pragmatic: creating small co-op stores, organizing efforts to obtain a paved road to their village, putting pressure on the government to bring in water and electricity.

Netzahualcoyotl, by contrast, which lies on the outskirts of Mexico City, is a vast shanty-town of over two million people. A group of priests and seminarians, living four to a room on bunk-beds, moved into one of the neighborhoods a few years ago. The parish they serve has all the usual religious activities — Mass, baptism, fiesta celebration. But great effort has gone into the development of base communities whose members serve as catalysts in organizing neighborhood efforts to obtain water, electricity, paved roads, and police protection. The women of the community have assumed leadership roles in these efforts. The priests and religious engaged in liberation work are almost all Mexican, in contrast to other countries, where missionaries often predominate.

THE KIND of *praxis* ("practice") which we found in rural and urban Mexico proved a pattern throughout much of Latin America. Contrary to the stereotyped picture of liberationists stirring up revolutions, the actual practice runs closer to the work of Saul Alinsky-type community organizing in the United States. The problems most often addressed are immediate community needs for water, sewage disposal, electricity, transportation, and jobs. The work does differ, however, from simple community organizing in two respects: theological reflection is an integral part of it, and social analysis provides a broader and long-term perspective on social problems.

Theological reflection at a base community meeting focuses primarily on Scripture and its application to the lives of com-

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munity members. A fairly typical meeting will include songs, the reading of Scripture, and a discussion of how the Scripture relates to life. While discussions include traditional questions about prayer, about family life, about suffering, the social needs of the community do receive special attention. Simple community actions, such as forming co-op stores, grow out of such prayerful discussions. We found also a sense of "solidarity" with poor peoples in other countries: thus many Mexican base communities honor Archbishop Oscar Romero and have led demonstrations in favor of the struggling poor in El Salvador. Popular catechisms encourage social consciousness by presenting Jesus as proclaiming a kingdom in which people work together, share together, and struggle together against injustice.

A very simple form of social analysis is often built into the catechisms. In Mexico and Nicaragua (but considerably less so in Peru and Ecuador), the social analysis is clearly influenced by Marxist analysis. In popular presentations, the picture of the "social tree" — with the trunk as an economic base, the branches as political structures, and the leaves as the realm of ideology (religion, morality, the media) — conveys Marx's economic base/superstructure analysis. Critics can legitimately argue that such analysis relies too much on one model and tends to oversimplify problems by making capitalism "the" enemy and socialism the easy solution. But borrowing from Marxist analysis does not mean advocating Marxist-Leninist tactics — a distinction which critics of liberation theology rarely make. The tactics and solutions of classical Marxist-Leninism (e.g., the need for a single vanguard party, for a dictatorship of the proletariat, for state control of everything, for armed revolution) were conspicuously absent from the popular presentations noted above. Most liberation priests and religious we met, moreover, were openly critical of such tactics and quite insistent that the poor themselves must dictate their own means of action. The actual practice of the Christian communities, as I have already noted, addresses immediate concerns through non-violent means of social change.

PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS, and ministers who follow the "liberation line" still constitute a minority in most of Latin America. This we found to be true in Mexico, but it was especially true in Ecuador where traditions from the Spanish colonial past still predominate. We found some church groups quite active in work with the poor: a United Brethren group active in organizing Indian peasant unions in villages north of Quito; religious women active in similar work further south, and a number of active groups in the diocese of Riobamba. The Ecuadorian experience did not add any special new understanding of liberation efforts, but it did sharpen our awareness of some problems peculiar (at least in their form) to Latin America. They are problems, inherited in part from a Spanish colonial past, with which liberation efforts must contend: the status of the indigenous Indian population, the omnipresence of military power, machismo attitudes toward women, and the economic dependency of Latin American nations on foreign countries.

The Quechua Indians, the women with their bead necklaces and the men in white pants and fedoras, remain the most visible sign of the past. But their attire cannot cover their poverty. Native American Indians in Latin America were not corralled into reservations and excluded from the culture as they were in North America. But their inclusion in Ecuador and other countries placed them in the lowest rank of the class structures inherited from Spanish colonialism. They are generally the most impoverished people in Latin America and furthest from liberation.

Women suffer from traditional machismo attitudes to a degree that was deeply disturbing. Even liberation theologians have not addressed this issue at any great depth. Quechua Indian women, by custom, do the carrying of heavy burdens on their backs; they are discouraged from learning Spanish just as young girls in Mexico are often discouraged from attending school. As we moved on to Peru, the gravity of the problem became even more evident: frequent physical abuse of wives by husbands (explainable in part by the pent-up anger men repress at work), women expected to "ask permission" from their husbands to leave the house in the evening, women who have little identity of their own.

THE ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY of Latin America constitutes the most serious structural weight of the past and present. But a sharper focus on this problem came from the Peruvian experience.

The somber and unrelenting gray skies of Peruvian winter along the coastal regions would be enough to create depression. More discouraging are the endless miles of sand and barren soil along the coast and the impenetrable jungles further in. Even with ideal political and economic systems, the dearth of arable land in many parts of Latin America would constitute a challenge. But Peru has suffered even more. An earthquake in Chimbote, a decade ago, shifted fishing beds, destroying much of the once immensely productive fishing industry. Some estimated unemployment and underemployment as high as seventy percent in this depressed city of more than 300,000.

In Lima and other parts of Peru, the failures of the military government, which ruled for a dozen years and which tried to initiate reforms from above, left the economy in a shambles. The inflation rate fluctuates from 40-70 percent a year. The exchange rate of Peruvian *soles* to the dollar was 38 to 1 a decade ago; it was 426 to the dollar when I was there. The poor, the great majority of the population, come in increasing numbers to the barrios on the outskirts of Lima. Milk and potatoes have become too expensive for most family incomes. Only tea and bread for breakfast and dinner, some soup and rice with a fruit or vegetable at the main meal, constitute the typical diet for hundreds of thousands.

What kind of social analysis did we find being employed in Peru? This would be difficult to summarize because we picked up different bits and pieces from different sources. The dependency of Latin America's economy on developed countries of the first world was often noted. This has long historical roots, beginning with Spanish exploitation of silver and gold in

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countries like Peru. It continued with the creation of "one-crop dependencies," i.e., each Latin American country providing some special natural resource (copper, coffee, bananas, tin, etc.) needed in countries of the Northern hemisphere. Starkist produces four hundred thousand cans of tuna a day, we were told. This fish could provide important protein for Peruvians; instead it goes to the United States, with much of it sold as pet food. Money taken out of poor countries far exceeds money invested in them. In the year since my visit, Lima's government has lamented U.S. measures affecting Peruvian revenue from silver and textile exports. But I did not find the Peruvians who spoke to us simply blaming all on foreign imperialism. They recognized the complexity of many contributing factors. One woman economist especially criticized native, land-owning "oligarchs" who, she said, were not even good capitalists because their profits, like those of foreign corporations, were never reinvested to stimulate growth in the whole economy.

Despite Peru's bleak situation, and with little hope of any significant change in the immediate future, the church of the poor appeared remarkably vibrant. In Peru, less emphasis is placed on the development of small base communities and more effort goes into the development of "popular parishes" in the barrios where the poor are crowded. The days of manifestos, the emphasis on simply awakening consciousness, even the appeals to Marxism, have given way to more immediate efforts in organizing local communities, and helping poor people to develop work skills and a sense of their own dignity. Some locales, such as Ilo in southern Peru or Augustino outside Lima, have developed teams of a dozen or more full-time educators and organizers, funded by church agencies in Europe, to carry out this work among the poor. Their work includes courses in theology, appreciation of Peruvian culture (e.g., folk songs and native art), and developing job skills (e.g., training unskilled urban immigrants as electricians and mechanics, or training rural peasants in improved and cooperative methods of farming).

Deepening the faith of the people is a central concern of these liberation efforts. "Solidarity" — within communities, between communities, among workers and peasants — has become a key concept for expressing the importance of Christian concern and support for others. Nearly two thousand people, including even illiterate people, attend Gustavo Gutierrez's school of theological reflection during the summer months in Peru. Recent theological studies have shown the positive, liberating aspects of traditional practices like devotion to the saints. The late Hugo Echegaray's *La Practica de Jesus* is a much-discussed theological source for understanding the political context and the political dimension of Jesus's ministry. A network of *Fe y Alegria* schools has been created to provide better education for children in poor barrios.

Peru faces a "long haul" in dealing with the poverty of its masses. Though I did not gain a sense of the long-range vision of liberation efforts in Peru, there was little discussion of Marxism. What was clear is that work with the poor is a growing commitment of many church people in Peru, and that

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those engaged in the work are bringing greater skills and organizing ability to their work.

NICARAGUA FOLLOWED Mexico on our trip, but I have set aside reflections on it because it is a very special case and deserves separate consideration. Nicaragua represents much of the hope held out for other Latin American liberation movements; at the same time, events there have moved so quickly since my visit, and the reports on all sides are filled with such passionate conviction that it is hard simply to evaluate them, let alone generalize from them.

What I found in Nicaragua was a church in tension with itself. The bishops feared the Marxist orientation of many Sandinista leaders. They feared that promises to respect religion might be an opportunistic effort to win international support and co-opt potential domestic opposition. They feared that the adulation of Sandino (Augusto Sandino who fought against U.S. marines and died in 1932) might replace veneration of Jesus, and that the independence of the faith and of the church might be swallowed up in revolutionary mobilization. Already the nationalization of some hospitals and health services and the displacing of Archbishop Obando of Managua as a regular on the televised Sunday Masses had contributed to these fears. The Christian base communities, on the other hand, reflected much of the active, popular support for the Sandinist regime. They saw their work as helping to "build a new society" through a variety of community works (e.g., as part of educational programs, as medical corps volunteers, in neighborhood cleanups, and especially in neighborhood patrols which greatly diminished crime in many communities).

Since that time, conflicts between the church and the government have increased, provoking a protest from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops last September. So, too, have conflicts within the church (several, for example, over the transfer of clergy identified with the revolution and popular in their localities) — provoking a letter from the pope warning of the potential for ideological and political abuses in the concept of a "people's church." Critics of liberation theology complain that its slogans and pronouncements have merely provided a religious blessing for the government's authority. Defenders point to the fact that five priests are prominent in the Sandinist regime, some in areas where a priest's presence flies in the face of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. (Three priests hold the posts of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of Culture, and of Welfare; one is head of the education of Sandinista youth; one serves on the Council of State.) All this suggests that it is over-simple to define the regime as nothing but Marxist-Leninist. Defenders further believe that, inspired by liberation theology, much of the church has done the right thing in supporting a revolution that is both under external American and Somozist pressure and subject to internal evolution.

Nicaragua's future is uncertain. It could remain impoverished or become simply another authoritarian regime in Latin America. But it may also overcome its problems and develop into an economically stable and democratic nation. Many Christians are still working hard to make this latter option a reality. The daunting test of liberation theology in Nicaragua will be whether, in the face of revolutionary fervor, political maneuvering, and CIA-sponsored "harassment," its "practice" can create truly effective and democratic politico-economic structures.

SOME CRITICS of liberation theology once looked upon it as a passing fad. It is certainly more than that; it is deeply rooted now in many sectors of the church, and these sectors are growing. Jesuit seminarians in Mexico, for example, are now trained primarily for work with the poor. Many critics of liberation theology believe it to be a substitution of Marxist revolutionary ideas and actions for works of faith. Some aspects of Marxist *analysis* do influence the liberation perspective — too much so, I felt, in Mexico, but less than I expected in Peru. But in all the countries we visited, great stress was placed on enabling the poor themselves to determine their lives; they were not encouraged to follow Marxist-Leninist tactics or to look to Marxist parties for their salvation.

The long-range goal of the liberation movement is not a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship or a total collective control by any state, but making peasants and workers the "active subject" of the productive process, a premise that is the central tenet of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens*. The most typical "practice" of liberation efforts focused on educating and organizing the poor to act on their own behalf, to create better living conditions in their communities, to obtain better job skills, to gain more education. Far from neglecting the faith, these efforts grew out of reflections on Scripture and faith.

My own sympathies may influence my assessments (just as my own antipathy for dogmatic Marxism-Leninism may also influence my judgments). But many criticisms I had entertained of liberation theology and its practice in years past were answered by what I saw in Latin America. Some of the social analysis seemed still too dependent on Marxism, but the actual practice of nearly all the Christian groups we encountered impressed me as responsible and rooted in faith.

Stage

SHEPARD RIDES AGAIN

THE DEVICE IS A SIMPLE ONE

AT THE END of the first act of Sam Shepard's *True West*, the two brothers sit at the table, Lee dictating his ludicrous screenplay to Austin. The two men in Lee's story have just abandoned their trucks and taken to their horses, the one in pursuit of the other. The comedy milks out of the situation as Lee's curtain speech takes on the tone of lyric menace that Shepard does so well. Both men are afraid, Lee says, although, until this point, they have not had

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the substance to embody a human emotion. "And the one who's chasin' doesn't know where the other one is taking him. And the one who's being chased doesn't know where he's going." As the light dies on stage, we realize that the scene has nothing to do with Lee's foolish variation on the stereotypical Western. The two men, uncertain of destination, tied to one another in a chase that confuses pursuer and pursued, are Lee and Austin. At the end of the play, after the presumably more gentle Austin has almost killed the overtly dangerous Lee, the two men stare at each other, "keeping a distance between them," as the published play says. On the surface, the image that Shepard gives us, the brothers standing amid the ruins of a suburban kitchen, is not at all the one that Lee evokes at the end of the first act. Yet, as the light fades again, we recognize the continuity of the personal image. True West, as the title says.

Shepard's device in the play is a simple one, an exchange of personalities between the principals. When the play begins, Lee, the older brother, a bum, a wanderer, a burglar, has just arrived at their mother's home where Austin, the educated brother, is house-sitting and trying to write a story that he expects to sell to the movies. By the end of the play, it is Lee whose story has been sold to the producer and a drunken Austin has filled the kitchen with toasters stolen from houses all over the neighborhood. Shepard is not interested here in conventional role reversal, but in the fact that the changes are an externalization of qualities implicit in the characters. Toward the end of the first act, both men indicate that each has envied the other for an imagined, a romanticized version of his life. This is not standard sibling rivalry, but a reflection of shared attitudes, ambitions, longings, inclinations behind a façade of apparent differences. The excellent production that has been brought to New York from Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater, at least in the performances of John Malkovich and Gary Sinise (who also directs), emphasizes the connection between the two brothers in terms of shared mannerisms that surface as the play progresses, particularly in Sinise's Austin, who both uses and mocks Lee's grossness as he descends into drunken release.

In an uncharacteristic moment of explicitness, Shepard allows Austin to say of the producer who wants him to write Lee's screenplay, "He thinks we're the same person." When he repeats the line with a drunken giggle, it may be taken as the character's bemused reaction to his unexpected replacement by his brother, but if we are to take seriously Shepard's own statement about his play, the line expresses its central theme. "I wanted to write a play about double nature," Shepard has said of *True West* (*Village Voice*, November 30, 1982). "It's a real thing. I think we're split in a much more devastating way than psychology can ever reveal." In this reading of the play, the brothers, each discovering himself in the other, are actually aspects of a single character in which the destructive impulse and the need to escape share space with the urge to order and the longing for shelter.

Shepard's use of "real" in the quotation above underlines another — and to me more interesting — theme of *True West*. In the printed play, Shepard insists on a realistic set, one that will not encroach on the dramatic situation. Here, as in most of Shepard's plays, the dramatist has invented a marvelously theatrical image (the offering, the rejection, and the acceptance of the toast has some of the force of the husking of the corn in *Buried Child*) that is not realistic but, at a deeper aesthetic and psychological level, is certainly real. An abstract set, insisting on meaning, might endanger the reality created by the action itself.

In the play, it is the titular word "true" rather than "real" that is given a workout. Early in the play, Lee mentions "projects" he thinks Austin's producer might be interested in: "Real commercial. Full a' suspense. True-to-life stuff." These contradictory phrases are only a joke at this point, but as Lee develops his Western there is a constant play of argument about whether or not Lee's plot is true. Austin's long story about his bar-hopping evening with their father in which the old man loses the bag of Chinese food with his false teeth in it is a typical Shepard set piece, a tall tale which Austin finishes with "Now that's a true story. True to life." The confusion about *true* as *verisimilar* and as *believable* runs through the play, coloring the whole idea of what constitutes the true West. In the end, this realistic kitchen, stylized to the extent that it is like so many other kitchens, in a suburban house near Los Angeles is the true West, the truer because it contains the amorphous chase of the brothers for whom, judging by the wreckage at the final curtain, this is "Tornado Country," which is where Lee set this story. It is a range on which Sam Shepard is very much at home. GERALD WEALES

Screen

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

TOOT TOOT TOOTSIE

WHEN *TOOTSIE* was still in "development," the central character was going to be a tennis pro who couldn't win a championship until he entered a women's tournament in drag. This idea never would have worked, at least not as well as the one on which *Tootsie* actually was based in the end. The reason is that the tennis pro would have been just another fictitious character. That role wouldn't have allowed Dustin Hoffman to draw upon who he really is, an actor, the way the subsequent script by Larry Gelbart does. In Gelbart's re-write, Hoffman plays Michael Dorsey, an out-of-work actor who turns himself into an actress named Dorothy Michaels in order to get a part in a soap opera. Hoffman's portrayal of Michael clearly relies upon his own experience as well as that provided by the script. He used his own life as an actor as a kind of second wall off which he can bounce his performance. The result is a performance with a wonderful resonance to it, a reverberation of comedy and pathos in which each intensifies the other.

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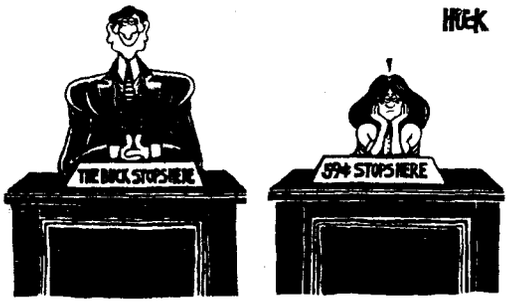
How Hoffman's feelings about acting filtered into Michael's can be seen from a couple of key scenes in *Tootsie*. The first is the scene where Michael decides to try out for the soap. The second is one that was added to the middle of the script to help Hoffman get over a difficulty he was having with the characterization of Michael. The latter was necessary because Hoffman couldn't accept Michael's eventual desire to get out of Dorothy's contract on the soap. It didn't seem to him logical that an actor would want to escape from a role he had worked this hard to succeed in. To make it easier for him to go along with Michael's ultimate rejection of Dorothy, a new scene was therefore added showing that Michael really did love his success for a while.

In the other scene, where Michael first decides to audition for the soap, he is inspired by an argument he has with George, his agent, who is played by *Tootsie*'s director, Sydney Pollack. George claims no one will hire Michael any more because of his reputation for being hard to work with. He points out that Michael even held up production on a simple commercial, where all he had to do was be a tomato, because he couldn't understand the motivation when the tomato was supposed to sit down. "A tomato can't think!" George shouts in exasperation. "It can't even move!" "Exactly!" Michael yells back. "It wasn't logical that it should sit down!" You can see why both Hoffman and Pollack were really able to throw themselves into this scene. It's a perfect parody of the arguments they had over *Tootsie*.



An actor like Hoffman is always trying to bring to bear on a role as much real experience as possible. *Tootsie* is only a special opportunity because it allows him to use the experience of acting itself in that way. The entire film seems graced by a special awareness of the ambiguity, the interchangeability, that reality and performance have for actors. When Michael tries out for the soap, for instance, what gets him the job is the rightness not of his looks or mannerisms as a woman, but of his frame of mind as Michael. He only decides to do a reading after his sometime girlfriend, Sandy (Teri Garr), whom he has coached for the part, fails to get it. She can't seem to evince the anger that the role requires, but Michael, just having been turned down for a half dozen roles, has all the frustration he needs in reserve. When the director of the soap starts to turn Dorothy down too, without even letting her open her mouth, she blows up. "You macho shithead" she calls him as she departs for the elevators. The producer follows her there to ask whether this display of pique was acting or the genuine article.

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"Which answer will get me an audition?" Dorothy replies, whereupon she gets both the audition and the part.

Needless to say, this complicates Michael's relationship with Sandy, whom he can't tell about his triumph because she would never forgive him. Matters are complicated further by the fact that he soon falls in love with his co-star on the soap, Julie (Jessica Lange), but starts making love to Sandy, even though they've always remained just friends before. (This happens because Sandy finds him in her bedroom one day with his clothes off. Actually, he was about to try on one of her dresses. Since he can't tell her that, he acts as if he undressed for her instead.) By the time Dorothy's option is renewed on the soap, Sandy thinks Michael is a homosexual, Julie thinks Dorothy is a lesbian, and we think we can now see the logic of Michael's wanting to get out of Dorothy's contract. The showdown with Sandy comes one night when she pleads with Michael to tell her the truth. He tells her part of it—that he's in love with another woman. Finally, she gets out of her relationship with him the only thing she wanted from it in the first place. She gets mad. She learns from him as a lover the anger he could never make her feel as a drama coach.

When Sandy didn't get the part in the soap, she was ready to quit acting. But as she storms out on Michael now, she vows to go on with her career in spite of her fury at him, or maybe because of it. I wonder whether a number of the people involved in making *Tootsie* didn't experience a similar feedback between their personal and professional lives. I'm thinking especially of Jessica Lange, who, like the actress she plays, is an unwed mother. (Was the part of Julie's baby in the film played by the baby Lange had with Mikhail Baryshnikov?) The one other person whose experience on the film must have resonated like Hoffman's, however, is Larry Gelbart. He was able to bring to bear on the soap opera his script contains his many years of experience as a writer for TV. In addition to successes like ***M*A*S*H***, Gelbart had a rare failure a few seasons ago when he tried to base a TV series on his relationship with his actress wife, Pat. The pressure of that effort and of Gelbart's meditations on TV fare in general are felt in the poignant monologues that Dorothy improvises on her soap. "When Larry isn't funny," another comedy writer once remarked, "he's profound."

Not too profound, though. That's why *Tootsie* is such a good comedy. It never quite takes itself seriously. During that scene Hoffman had added to the middle of the film, Michael explains to George why he's so good at playing a woman. It's because as an actor, sitting by the phone waiting for some director to call with a job, being powerless in his relationships with directors and producers, he has come to understand how a woman feels. This explanation may work for Hoffman. It may be yet another instance of how he was able to bring his experience as an actor into play in *Tootsie*. But it doesn't hold true for Michael himself, who puts poor Sandy through the same humiliations he here claims to understand all too well. *Tootsie* constantly undermines its own wisdom about women in subtle, funny ways. Julie at one point tells Dorothy she wishes that instead of being devious, men would just come out

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and say, "I find you interesting. I'd like to make love with you." So at a party Michael tries to pick her up by saying just that, and she throws a glass of champagne in his face.

One night Michael remarks to his roommate (Bill Murray), "I think Dorothy's smarter than I am." The movie is smarter than the people who created it, too. If you listened to what Pollack and Hoffman have been saying about *Tootsie*, you'd never go to see it. They think they've made a movie about Feminism. "If a man puts on a dress in 1982," Pollack told Gelbart at their first meeting, "he'd better become a better man for it." Fortunately for us, all either Pollack, Gelbart, or Hoffman cared about while actually making the movie was that the man who put on the dress at least be good at playing a woman. At that, Hoffman is superb. Like Michael, he's too absorbed in perfecting his Dorothy to worry about whatever larger issues that might raise. The result is that the comedy in *Tootsie* seems to come about, like Michael's troubles, as a natural, almost inevitable consequence of the situation the film creates.

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Books: THE GOD OF OUR CALCULATIONS

JOSEPH FICHTER'S *The Catholic Cult of the Paraclete* has stood since 1975 as the most professional yet appreciative study of the charismatic movement. Meredith McGuire, whose scrutiny dates back more than a decade, has completed what must now stand in the center of the plentiful publications on Catholic pentecostals. Her perspective is that of participant-observer, sympathetic yet sober. Her attention is fastened upon four features of the movement: strategies for recruitment and allegiance, dynamics of prayer meetings, attitudes involved in faith healing, and authority style in an exuberant community.

McGuire sees the movement attracting persons whose reliance on a firm sense of order is no longer served by the church. A vernacular liturgy left in large part to local adaptation; moral issues on which there is heated and public dispute; entire segments of the layperson's creed lobotomized out of existence: the church is failing to provide an authoritative and simple way to salvation. And in public, before a cynical and secularized society, the church offers a limp and unimposing presence. To such a clientele, now more middle-aged than the earlier waves of young converts, McGuire sees the movement holding up a reassuringly secure vision. Its doctrine is homely yet definite, its authority imperturbable, its moral teaching without quibble.

Increasing deviation in perspective and emphasis will probably strain relations between the movement and the larger church, which has hitherto been acquiescent. McGuire sees in the group a growth of sectarian qualities: a contempt for society at large, a sense of privileged access to truth, a creed that claims dominance over other sources of understanding, a leadership which requires total allegiance. Contrary to Fichter, who saw in the movement the more fluid and less totalitarian qualities of a cult, she observes that its steersmen are growing increasingly hostile towards competing navigators, and are heading in a more sectarian direction.

Also noted is the privatizing of religion among charismatics. Few social activists are drawn into membership nor, once committed, do charismatics tend to involve themselves actively in the economic, social, and political order. Ethical concerns are explicit on individual behavior or marital relations (e.g., male dominance and female submission). But matters of social ethics are expounded with less bite. Ministries of the movement are mostly devoted to its own membership. ". . . [I]nteraction in the public

PENTECOSTAL CATHOLICS
POWER, CHARISMA AND ORDER IN A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT
Meredith B. McGuire
Temple Univ. Press, $22.50, 270 pp.

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE
Harold S. Kushner
Schocken, $10.95, 149 pp.

James Tunstead Burtchaell

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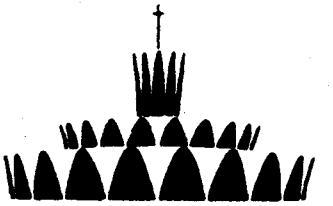

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sphere is defined as far less important than key aspects of the private spheres: personal devotion, family life, and the prayer group. . . . In essence, the pentecostal movement among Catholics represents the celebration and enhancement of the privatization of religion. [This] enhances the segregation of 'opinions' on social issues from the sphere of religious experience and meaning, [and] makes it highly unlikely that the movement will produce any significant effort for socio-economic change, at least in developed countries. Theodicies provided by the Catholic pentecostal belief system legitimate members' middle-class comforts and allow them to express their concern for less comfortable members of society by prayer."

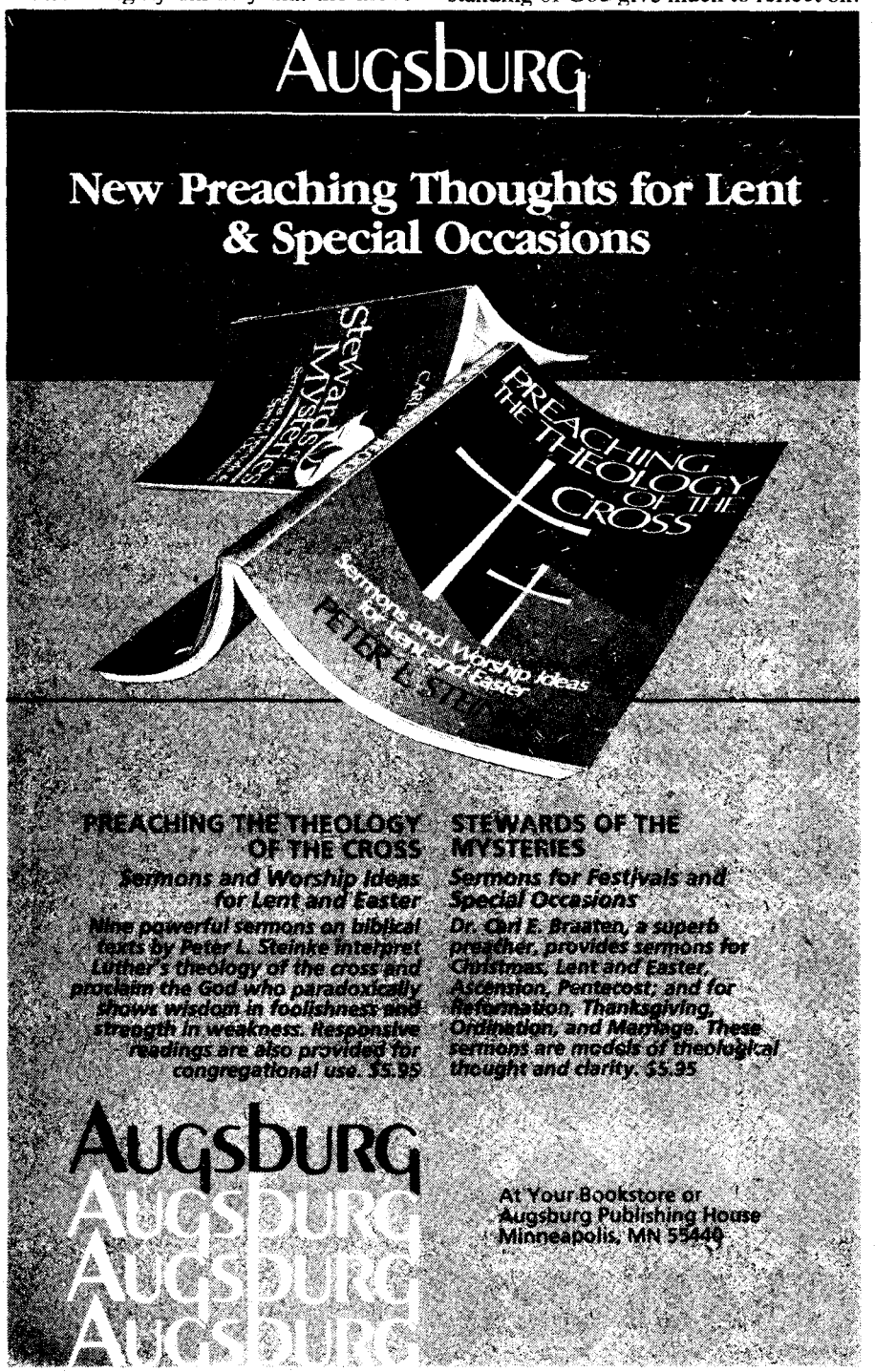
For a theologian, McGuire's soundings into the implicit charismatic understanding of God give much to reflect on. The pentecostal is familiarized with a Lord who is attentive to the most everyday occurrences. He or she looks to Jesus to relieve high blood pressure, find lost car keys, and secure employment. Pain, poverty, and illness are interpreted as sequelae of sin or the work of Satan or evil spirits. Thus healing prayer begins with the exorcism of demons and an appeal for the alleviation of sin, so that serious sickness can then be relieved.

This Lord of Pentecost is expected to incline his ear to the most earthy and particular supplications. This could betoken a belief in his exquisite care: if no lily flowers but under his watchful eye, surely he cares distinctly about your sister's shingles and the current price of your GM stock. Yet somehow he does lack something of the grandeur of the sparrow-eyeing Lord. He is diminished by the presumption that he is at our beck to remedy our paltriest concerns.

The church is ready to acknowledge miracles when they show forth the divine benevolence and testify to special women and men whom the Lord has possessed by his Spirit. But the craving to construe every auto accident and upturn in the business cycle as a skirmish between Jesus and Satan for possession of each one of us has too little in common with our received faith in the Father almighty. It is the Gospel writ tiny.

It is no copyright of charismatics, of course. This God so widely worshiped has troubled many a soul. For if an influenza fever broken or sunshine on a wedding day or a new furnace donated to a convent are, to true believers, to be taken as signs of God's periodic affection, then spina bifida at birth or the hit-and-run death of a young father of three or dry rot in the basement beams must be darkened by God's wrath. If all the give-and-take of welcome and dread events is spoken by God in a decipherable stream of good and bad news, if weal and woe mean blessing and curse, then this is a puzzling world and that is surely a God you would want to be wary of.

Harold Kushner was not wary. When his firstborn was diagnosed at three to suffer from a wasting, terminal illness, the young rabbi felt his faith buckle. "Like most people, my wife and I had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grown up with an image of God as an all-wise, all-powerful parent figure who would treat us as our earthly parents did, or even better. If we were obedient and deserving, He would reward us. If we got out of line, He would discipline us, reluctantly but firmly. He would protect us from being hurt or from hurting ourselves, and would see to it that we got what we deserved in life." But when days go dark and humans suffer, this theology invites them either to begin blaming themselves or, if they can find no equivalent fault, to begin hating God.

Alerted by his own misery to the many ways good folk in his flock could be stricken, Kushner choked on the God-defending theologies he had been taught: that God would prove fair in the long run, that suffering ennobles or purges those who bear up under it, that no one is given a heavier burden than he or she can bear, that early death is to rescue the innocent from a depraving world. These seemed either to deny reality or to imply an unworthy deity, and they also mitigated outrage at injustice in the world.

After Aaron Kushner died at fourteen, his father had wrestled the ancient problem through, and he brought out his quickly popular book on God and suffering. What makes it so worth reading is the author's sensible rejection of theory after theory devised to explain how the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune all bespeak a mysterious but eventually decipherable purpose of a fair-minded God. But Kushner's own theological answer is, sadly, almost as flawed as the ones he disallows. Ironically, it is constructed on a profound misunderstanding of *Job*.

That book (*sans* the prologue and epilogue of a later editor who flinched at the daring of the first edition) was published to correct a teaching derived from the great prophets. Whereas more ancient thinkers had explained unmerited prosperity or suffering as retribution for others' deeds, shared out across a tribe or down the generations of a family, Jeremiah and Ezekiel rejected that explanation. In their view, the Lord would be no more ready than any just man among us to favor or to afflict someone on another's account. Every man suffers for his own sins. Both Job and his visitors abide by this prophetic teaching. His adversity convinces them he must be guilty of some awesome offense, but it enrages him because he knows that is not the case. The Lord, roused to hurricane force by all this theological bickering, rages onto the scene. He demands why, when he had never thought it needful for them to understand how the tides flow or when the mountain goats breed or whence comes the dew, they should be so cocksure that he had unpuzzled for them the far greater mystery of suffering. Enough for them to knows that he knows what he is about. Job's answer, and the book's sign-off for theologians: "I had better lay my finger on my lips."

Job, of course, helped provoke the turmoil which led to the *Wisdom of Solomon* and its break-through doctrine that the just would survive injustice and death and would journey, not to the underworld with the unjust, but to the heavenly court. Latter-day Judaism was subsequently swept by a Sadducean distrust of this theological development, but Christians received it, through the Pharisees, as a progressive insight of the living tradition. *Job*'s point is that believers ought never imagine that God's governance and justice are simple enough for them to comprehend in their application. Rabbi Kushner has somehow turned this around. "[The author] believes in God's goodness and in Job's goodness, and is prepared to give up his belief . . . that God is all-powerful. Bad things do happen to good people in this world, but it is not God who wills it. God would like people to get what they deserve in life, but He cannot always arrange it. Forced to choose between a good God who is not totally powerful, or a powerful God who is not totally good, the author of the Book of Job chooses to believe in God's goodness." Kushner has the book balking at precisely what it was written to vaunt: a Lord whose goodness and justice bear upon us in ways that transcend any of our daily calculations and interpretations.

Kushner's theology and that which McGuire describes among charismatics stand starkly opposed to one another. But

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ROBERT S. ELLWOOD *is Bishop James W. Bashford Professor of Oriental Studies in the School of Religion, University of Southern California.*

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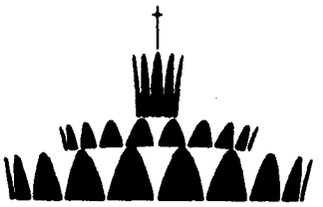

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they are alike in that they both diminish God, and in doing so they both miss some elements very central to Christian speculation on God's governance.

First, one cannot safely pick and choose what in the world will serve as signs of God. One person will cultivate posters with starlit mountain lakes and inscriptions from the Psalms, and will luxuriate in a God of elegant bounty. But another will be gripped with loathing for a God who drowned his young sister in exactly such a lake. Both are really picking out things and events which they, according to some prior notions of their own, not found in nature or history, have decided are revealing. However, they are not receiving the revelation from what they behold; they are identifying it according to what they have already accepted. The church does not see nature or history offering any consistent or decipherable vision of God. She points us straightaway at Jesus's death and resurrection. Jesus, who dies for those who kill him, displays in himself and for his Father an absence of all wrath, an inability to punish, a relentless love. In him God is disclosed to us. Elsewhere he is not revealed; he is suggested, by persons or scenes or events.

Second, one thing which God apparently does not create *ex nihilo* is the character, the innermost *ego* of a human. That, unlike freckles or a musical ear or a gentle temperament, is not ours: it is *us*, and we must be the author of it, of our self. Everything else we have; but that, we are. God creates us, but this most

Religious booknotes

The past in the present

Mary Gerhart

ONE OF THE MOST urgent needs come to light with liberation theology, but inspired not only by liberationists, is for the retrieval and in some instances the correction of certain badly noted or overlooked historical data. What does it mean to have a historical consciousness? For Rosemary Ruether it means to understand and to rectify when necessary those visions of reality which one's self embodies. In *Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian* Ruether explores her intellectual itinerary through her own Christian tradition: "One cannot correctly pose the question of the meaning of Christian identity today until one is willing to tell the story of Christian origins truthfully. Or to put it another way, people who have to lie about their history cannot clarify their identity." In this book, Ruether explicates anew her own work on religious origins — Christology, anti-Semitism, the Goddess, Mariology, and political theology. The title alludes to the distinctions traditionally made between doctrinal certitude, theological unanimity, and disputed questions; it suggests that the issue of understanding our origins is far from being settled.

Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian, by Rosemary Ruether, Abingdon, $9.95, 144 pp.

MARY GERHART *teaches hermeneutics, religion, and literature at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. She has published a book and articles in philosophy of religion and literary criticism.*

The devil, you say! Jeffrey Burton Russell's *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* is a lively historical theology of the problem of evil from the first through the fifth centuries. Russell's self-conscious and critical reflection on historical method marks him as a discriminating interpreter and his book as reliable. *Satan* draws from major original sources on diabolism and includes a bibliographical essay on minor sources. If Origen was an "inventive diabologist," Russell is an inventive analogist, restoring legends such as Plato's myth of the cave in terms of a darkened cinema and the doctrine of evil in terms of Einstein's remark on the necessity of logical simplicity. Sensationalist elements are illustrated but not elaborated: Satan represented as women, or blacks; the shift within Christianity from the ideal of martyrdom to the ideal of soldiery. Russell concludes by stating and responding to seven objections to belief in the Devil. When he writes, "Whether or not the Devil exists objectively, it is certain that the Devil exists in the sense that the pheonomenon Devil, the concept Devil, exists and can be defined historically with a reasonable degree of coherence," his claim is challenging, if somewhat epistemologically obscure.

Satan: The Early Christian Tradition, by Jeffrey Burton Russell, Cornell University Press, $19.95, 258 pp.

Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity, by Peter Brown, University of California Press, $22.95, 347 pp.

Peter Brown's *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* is a collection of essays written since his well-known book on Augustine ten years ago. Some of the essays review Brown's criticism of accepted models (Gibbon's, Hume's, Pirenne's) for thought on the meaning of the holy from fourth-century C.E. Syria to early modern Russia. The best essays are vintage Brown: his construction of new keys to unlock the codes of the past — codes preserved in relics and ikons, legends by and about holy persons, trials by ordeal. So accustomed are we to the sociology of suspicion that Brown's appreciative explanation

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inward center of his creature, our self, we must co-create. In that way we are identical with who we are. All else, the corona of endowments and influences, is given to us. But our moral personality is who we have managed, through choices or the forfeiture of choices, to become.

Third, we need time and opportunity to become. We cannot imagine the possibility of growth to human maturity, into transforming love, in a world where events are not haphazard. Any of the tidier worlds our imaginations might fashion, where people could expect a fair reward for their efforts, would be deprived of the most precious advantage our world now enjoys: the possibility of virtue. Appetite for the reward would outcrave desire for our neighbor's welfare. Strangely, in just such a just world we could never become just. It would be in our interest to give our neighbors their due, but precisely because of this self-interest we could never develop the strenuous and loving zeal for their dignity and rights which is the virtue of justice. Just acts would be guaranteed, but just people could never ripen. We would be surrounded by justice but unable to possess it. Ironically, the only world imaginable wherein we can grow to the full stature of human maturity is the one in which both good and bad things — and evil things — can happen, and the best people can be crucified.

The God whom McGuire reports and the God whom Kushner portrays would both be loving, perhaps, but not loving enough to allow us to become so.

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of the artifacts of antiquity startles and delights. For example, the supernatural, being partly "the depository of the objectified values of the group" in the early medieval period, reappears in the miracles of St. Foye as a "stalagmite, formed from the deposit of innumerable little drops of the gossip and value judgments of a region." One of the best essays is a contrast of ikons with the Book of Kells, "a talisman from the Third World of the Celtic church remote from the ancient Mediterranean of Rome and Byzantium."

Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages, by Caroline Walker Bynum, University of California Press, $28.50, 280 pp.

CAROLINE Walker Bynum's *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* is also a collection of essays which immensely adds to and corrects our understanding of the past. Her key theses are that "the female (or woman) and the feminine are not the same" and that religious images of the feminine are not to be taken literally. She distinguishes first between canons and monks on the basis of their self-understanding as disclosed in primary texts, i.e., the canonical concern for edification and the monastic emphasis on individual salvation, then between the "individual" and the "self" in twelfth-century texts. The first essays become the context for what Bynum calls the "feminization" of images in the high Middle Ages: for example, Jesus and the Abbot referred to as mother, monks as women, blood as milk. Bynum also shows how certain kinds of feminine imagery seem to have inhibited the presence of other kinds.

The more recent past is richly integrated in Gordon Craig's *The Germans*. The chapter "Religion" is a balanced evaluation of the handling of the Küng case, the papal visit in 1980, and the Kirchenbund agreement with the DDR in 1978, all against the background of German religious history since the Reformation. Throughout the book the roles of religion and of religious leaders give evidence that for a large part of the German population, religion is a vital force in public as well as in private. Craig supports forceful judgments with many kinds of documentation. A life-long student of German history, he is professor emeritus at Stanford University and president of the American Historical Association.

The Germans, by Gordon Craig, Putnam's, $15.95, 350 pp.

A recent book on the 1973 coup in Chile which overthrew the Allende government, Fernando Alegría's novel, *Chilean Spring*, evokes a more profound grasp of the significance of the event than even the documentaries and films which have appeared in the U.S. In the opening chapter, "The Gospel according to Cretien," Alegria plunges us into the ambiguity which accompanies every historical reality. A skillfully narrated account of a Chilean photographer (who is murdered during the coup) and his wife (who survives), the book suggests the complex link between the fate of a country and the choices of people who attend it.

Chilean Spring, by Fernando Alegría, Latin American Literary Review Press, University of Pittsburgh, $15.50, $7.95 paper, 160 pp.

Combining the best in both Anglican and Roman traditions, Robert Hale's *Canterbury and Rome: Sister Churches* is a thoughtful review of where things stand today. In an afterword, Canon Allchin gives tribute to the "freshness and originality" of the book whose author is an American Catholic monk. Hale argues that the model of two sisters is appropriate for the relations between the two churches, generously documenting the use of the term in public conversations, statements, and the scriptures. His two chapters on the "consanguinity" of the two traditions and on prophecy as a distinguishing characteristic of the Anglican church convey a sense of patient urgency that all members of both churches be committed to reconciliation.

Canterbury and Rome: Sister Churches, by Robert Hale, Paulist, $7.95, 188 pp.

MARY GERHART

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Chosenness & the imperial dream

THE STORY OF STORIES
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE AND ITS GOD
Dan Jacobson
Harper and Row, $11.95, 211 pp.

Martin E. Marty

WERE people still capable of shock, Dan Jacobson's new book should shock them. He is a Jew, but the effect of his book is to suggest that the people of Israel, victims of genocide, were shaped by the command from God to commit genocide. Should Christians feel that their New Covenant gets them off the hook, Jacobson effectively shows that if they carry it one way they must commit violence against Jews. If they carry it another, they will simply acquire the Jewish "story" with its murderous plot.

The book appeared months ago, to almost no stir. The publisher, having anticipated bitter and noisy controversy, sent a second round of Jacobson books to editors and reviewers. "Haven't you noticed this?" Harper and Row seemed to be asking. We has not.

Could it be that we ignore arguments like Jacobson's because we have been dulled by so many bizarre and phony *Holy Blood, Holy Grails* or *Chariots of the Gods* to take the serious seriously? Notice, too, that Jacobson, a London writer of South African birth, is an outsider: he does not claim to be a scholar and he is not a believer. Dismiss him. Yet, unfortunately for the peace of those who will permit their peace to be disturbed, he convinces us "that both believer and nonbeliever can agree about many things of prime importance in the text they have shared." He misses much — including the God of "steadfast love." But few modern writers have done more to point consistently to God's capacity for justice, the divine moral sense and control.

Why pay attention to this outsider's account? Few books of this type can do more than pose issues for people of faith. If this is the basic story, the plot of Jewish peoplehood and the ambiguous heart of the Christian beginnings, we must either work hard to ignore it after we know about it, or face up to its point. The texts are there, ready to disclose either what he finds there or happier alternatives.

Jacobson, a novelist, knows the power of story and pays due respect to the Jewish story. He sees Jews acting with cosmic chutzpah, not necessarily *in* bad faith but developing *a* bad faith. The God of Israel is a projection, a fiction, a fantasy, a point of focus for a people's earliest fears and hopes. They must have had a moral impulse and they did have great pride: "They invented [Yahweh], one can say, *so that* they might be chosen. They wanted to be exalted above other nations . . . (Deut. 26:19)." Chosenness curiously did not mean that they were bound. No, the yoke's on Yahweh, who becomes bound to their imperial dreams.

Oh, the fine moral sense — that is there from page one until now. The chosen Israelites are chosen "to receive both his Law and the Land. But it is made clear to them that they cannot have the latter without the former." They stop obeying the Law and they lose the Land. The story-tellers are doggedly consistent. In Psalm 93:1 and 1 Samuel 2:3-4 "it is clear that God is praised . . . not just as a God of upheaval but *because* he is the God of upheaval."

Chapter Two develops the genocide-command theme, because Genesis 12:6-7, 15:18-21; Exodus 23:27-31; Exodus 34:13-16 and many passages in later books, especially Judges, do. They are core texts, not marginal to the theme. "What was to be done" to the people already in Israel? They were to be driven out with "hatred and fear . . . exterminatory zeal." Here are "bloodthirsty fantasies" redeemed in part only because the authors take pride in seeing Yahweh treat Israel as they were to treat Canaan — when the Law is broken and the people are vile.

Jacobson spends only a few lines on today's Israel. The connection is there. Mr. Begin and his followers still believe the plot. They live by what is "merely a

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dream imperialism, the imperialism of impotent fantasy." Then:

> Merely! There are many things to be learned from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Perhaps the most important of them all is never to despise the power of dreams. Especially of those dreams which deny the veracity of everyone else's.

To the degree that Jacobson has a point, to that degree he will be disruptive of serenity at interfaith Jewish-Christian conversations. Yet his book can inspire no pride, no smugness, from Christians. They can either interpret *their* chosenness as an imperial dream dangerous to Israel's *or* they have to face up to the problems Israel's Yahweh has left in the Jewish plot. It will be harder from henceforth for Christians who think all will be well if they simply repeal the Jewish story that gave them birth. Romans 9-11 will not let them do so. The prophets will not let them do so. The prophets will not rescue either people; "it was the *un*truth of the prophetic interpretation of the history of Israel which ensured its survival." Thus, Jacobson.

I have indicated some of my reservations and counterarguments. Jacobson has no feel for the sense of the sacred, of divine disclosure, of the creative sloppiness of Yahweh who can forget and repent and change. To make too much of these objections at this moment, however, would be to dodge too soon the points about story and morals and the danger of dreams which Jacobson presses. Let mercy come tomorrow, with the morning dew.

The challenge of neo-traditionalism

KNOWLEDGE AND THE SACRED

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Crossroad, $15.50, 341 pp.

Robert S. Ellwood

KNOWLEDGE AND THE SACRED is based on the University of Edinburgh's Gifford Lectures of 1981. The first Muslim, and indeed the first non-Westerner, to deliver that highly distinguished series, S. H. Nasr, formerly professor of the history of science and philosophy at the University of Tehran in his native Iran and now professor of religion at Temple University, only enhances their prestige by his immense learning in both Eastern and Western thought, and his skillfully crafted arguments. However, his position will doubtless be a continuing focus of debate, for it eloquently represents an emerging movement which

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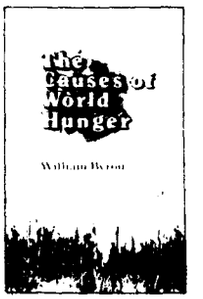

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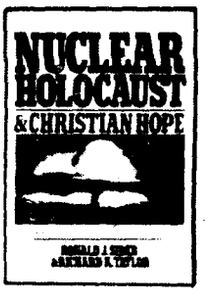

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radically challenges most contemporary science, philosophy, and religion.

That position may be called neo-traditionalism. It is not to be confused with Catholic traditionalism or any other traditionalism specific to a particular religion or culture, for it disputes both their exclusivism and the "temporal exclusivism" of modernity with its conceit of progress. Instead, neo-traditionalism postulates a "sapiential tradition" embedded in all religions, but today in great danger of being lost. The school is based on the thought of René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, and Ananda Coomaraswamy; its exponents in America, besides Nasr, include Huston Smith and Jacob Needleman. While it has obvious affinities with other "universal mysticisms," such as Aldous Huxley's Vedantic "perennial philosophy," the intellectual lineage of this outlook is distinctive, and some of its spokesmen have turned less to Vedanta than to the mystical philosophy of Islam, on which Nasr is an eminent authority and which is clearly his spiritual heartland.

It is difficult to summarize adequately in short space a position as profound and complex as neo-traditionalism. One could do no better than recommend the book under review to the serious inquirer. But here are a few of its salient ideas, according to Nasr. The sapiential tradition is concerned with the true, and therefore sacred, reality of mind and cosmos; that quest is its supreme expressions such as the Upanishads, the *Tao-*

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SUMMER 1983

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MICHAEL WARREN, Department of Theology, St. John's University.
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te-Ching, or the Neoplatonism which undergirds so much of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic mystical thought. An innate knowledge of true reality dwells in the depths of everyone's consciousness, usually only latently, though it can be aroused by ecstatic, contemplative awareness. Knowledge *of* this knowledge is enshrined in the traditional religions, transmitted particularly in their spiritualities and expressed in their sacred art. All those means can serve to awaken within one the innate knowledge, which best happens within an authentic community of faith.

But "modern" uses of the mind, like modern scholarly approaches to religion (and anything else) tend to direct one away from rather than toward wisdom. The intellect, as an aspect of ultimate, sacred reality, illumines reality when fully charged by ecstatic contemplation. Indeed, the very presence of intellect, rightly comprehended, teaches us the spiritual nature of the cosmos. Yet the objectifying, rationalizing nature of modern thought stifles that deeper mode of knowing. The mind now becomes, not a lamp illuminating inner meanings, but a flashlight catching the surface shape of a few things in a dark universe. For the universe is a hierophany, a mandala, with octaves of meaning not reducible to the methods of present science. In this universe our role should be "pontifical"; we should be its servant priests. Instead we have tried to be Prometheus, thief of its power-secrets. For having brought us to the present pass, historical progress is not to be deified, for much of this was better understood in earlier times.

Certainly the neo-traditionalist stance says a great deal that all concerned with spiritual values will agree is important, however one interpret the idea of a sapiential tradition. Nasr presents that position with intellectual brilliance and depth, making a cogent case for its contemporary relevance. His is unquestionably a mind of the highest caliber.

Yet some readers will be disturbed by a partisan flavor in the utterances of neo-traditionalism which even as wide-minded a book as Nasr's does not entirely avoid. Too often neo-traditionalism seems more ready to accuse than to engage in dialogue, or to perceive how modern thinkers may after all be essaying in their own way the same tasks as the philosophic saints of yesteryear. In its animus against everything having to do with "the modern mind," neo-traditionalism seems unable to perceive the extent to which the agenda of twentieth century "mainstream" philosophy, whether phenomenology, existentialism, or linguistic analysis, has not really been so different from that of such ancient sapients as Plotinus, Shankara, or Chuang-tzu: to clear away the human graffiti from the unspeakable mystery of Reality itself. While the modern reality

> *Through the downward flow of the river of time . . . knowledge has become separated from being and the bliss or ecstasy which characterizes the union of knowledge and being.*
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may not always be given a label reading "The Sacred," as neo-traditionalists would wish, is not a main point of mystical philosophy to teach us that names are not the same as things, above all with respect to the Ultimate which is unnamable? And it would be fatuous to deny the ecstatic element in the seeing of such men as Wittgenstein or Heidegger.

Further, the neo-traditionalists appear totally uninterested in those areas in which modern religion has undoubtedly done a better job than traditional, such as practical involvement in issues of social justice. Their laments are full of Guénon and Schuon, but give scant notice to such better-known moderns as M.K. Gandhi, D. Bonhoeffer, or John XXIII, who not only show that spirituality and wisdom have their robust exemplars in this century, but also that they can be conjoined with social concern. Instead, one is troubled by whiffs in neo-traditionalism of the sort of bookish, hothouse spirituality which disdains such worldly cares, and is usually accompanied by a mood of romantic conservatism.

A clear danger exists that the neo-traditionalists will become another sect of those knights of the true faith who retire into their citadels of medievalism, classicism, or whatever, taking potshots at whatever appears in their sights as "the modern world," but never emerging from the castle's warmth to engage the foe in single combat, much less look into his eyes to see whether, ideology aside, he may not be a man of like passions as himself. I read Nasr's book with deep appreciation, yet warning flags went up in my mind as I marked the hagiographic terms in which neo-traditionalism's heroes, Guénon, Coomaraswamy, and Schuon, are lauded, and the flurry of negative rhetoric which not seldom accompanies the word "modern," or worse, "modernism." (However, certain trends in re-

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cent physics are well regarded, though secular evolutionism is attacked.) It would be tragic if neo-traditionalism should allow itself to become a mere intellectual cult, for what it has to say, as the bulk of Nasr's splendid book demonstrates, is desperately important and far larger than the school's cultic aspects. Neo-traditionalism must therefore present itself to the contemporary world in dialogue marked by the openness and generosity of spirit that makes any dialogue fruitful.

Church/world watch

(Continued from page 39)

best shape the future of superpower relations in a nuclear world.

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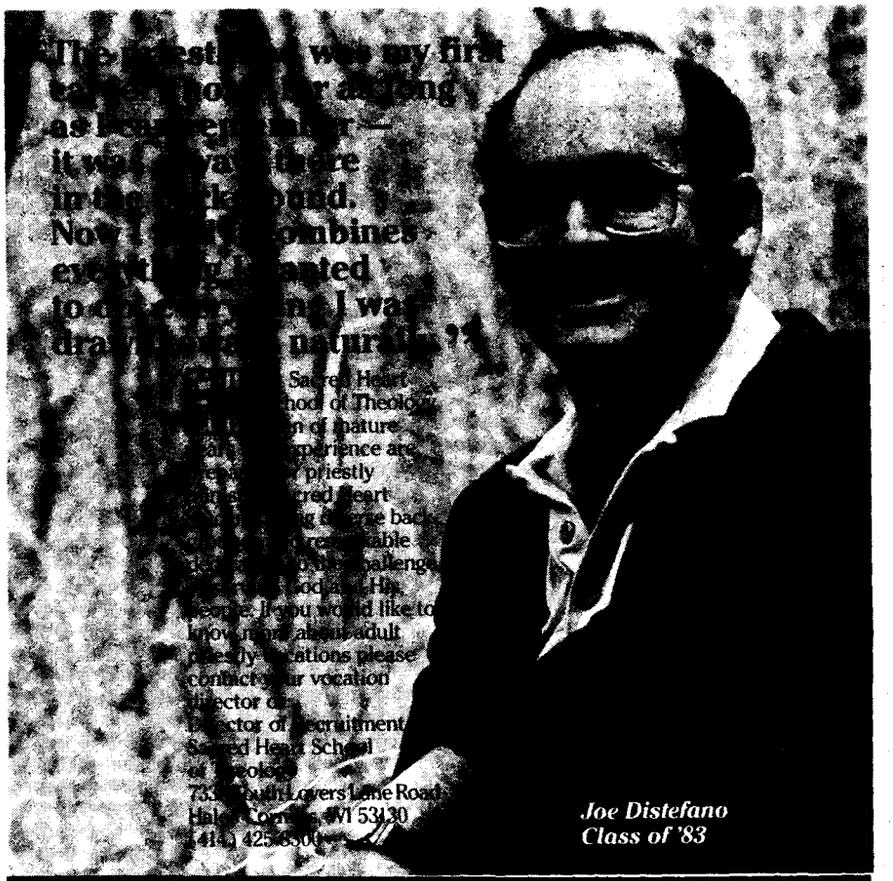

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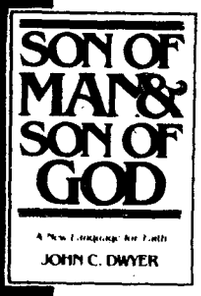

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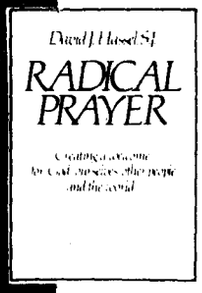

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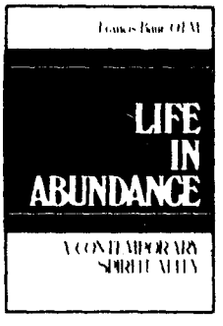

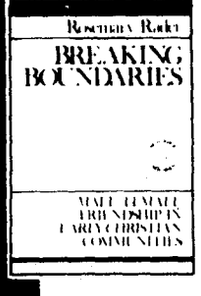

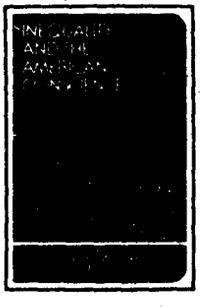

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